

HANDE SÜZER THE AGRARIAN QUESTION, DEGROWTH AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH BILKENT UNIVERSITY 2022

THE AGRARIAN QUESTION, DEGROWTH AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

A Master's Thesis

by
HANDE SÜZER

Department of
International Relations
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Ankara
December 2022



To my family

THE AGRARIAN QUESTION, DEGROWTH AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

By Hande Süzer

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Tore Fougner

Advisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Samuel J. Hirst

Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Zehra Taşdemir Yaşın

Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

Refet Soykan Gürkaynak

Director

THE AGRARIAN QUESTION,
DEGROWTH AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The Graduate School of Economics and Social
Sciences

of

İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

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HANDE SÜZER

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ABSTRACT

THE AGRARIAN QUESTION, DEGROWTH AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Süzer, Hande

M.A., Department of International Relations

Advisor: Associate Professor Tore Fougner

December 2022

Despite the rise of the degrowth idea and movement, which opposes the limitless economic growth mindset, little work has been done on its perspective on agriculture, land and the conditions of the peasantry, especially in relation to the Global South. Yet, the agrarian lens is not only desirable but also necessary for degrowth to expand its horizon at the theoretical level as well as its activism to tackle contemporary crises of environment, climate, and global capitalism. This thesis aims to draw on the “agrarian question” from critical agrarian studies and bring relevant elements of it to broaden degrowth’s research agenda. By conceptualizing agrarian elements within degrowth, possible ways to achieve agrarian degrowth are explored. As a result, social movements, pluriversality, agroecology, and delinking have been identified to be of significant importance in driving agrarianization of degrowth and a degrowth transition. The main argument of the thesis is that social movements will be the main actors of change during a transition period, with agroecological practices adopted for agricultural production and rural livelihoods and supported by pluriverse practices at all levels for the end goal of delinking the Global

South from the global capitalist system and its negative social and environmental effects.

Keywords: Agrarian Question, Critical Agrarian Studies, Degrowth, Ecological Crisis, Global South



ÖZET

TARIM SORUNU, KÜÇÜLME VE KÜRESEL GÜNEY

Süzer, Hande

Yüksek Lisans, Uluslararası İlişkiler

Tez Danışmanı: Doçent Doktor Tore Fougner

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Sınırsız ekonomik büyüme zihniyetine karşı çıkan küçülme (degrowth) fikri ve hareketinin yükselişine rağmen özellikle Küresel Güney ile bağlantılı olarak, tarım, toprak ve köylülüğün koşullarına ilişkin perspektifi üzerine çok az çalışma bulunmaktadır. Küçülme için tarımsal mercek sadece arzu edilir olmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda onun teorik düzeyde ufkunu genişletmesi ve aktivizminin çevre, iklim ve küresel kapitalizmin güncel krizleriyle mücadele etmesi için de gereklidir. Bu çalışma, eleştirel tarım çalışmalarına konu olan “tarım sorunu”ndan (agrarian question) yararlanarak onun ilgili unsurlarını küçülmenin araştırma alanını genişletmek için kullanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Küçülme dahilinde, tarımsal unsurları kavramsallaştırarak, tarımsal küçülmeyi (agrarian degrowth) gerçekleştirmenin olası yollarını araştırmaktadır. Sonuç olarak, toplumsal hareketlerin, çoğulcu evrenselliğin (pluriverse), agroekolojinin ve hurûcun (delinking), küçülmenin tarımsallaşması ve küçülme geçişini yönlendirmesi için büyük bir öneme sahip olduğu belirlenmiştir. Bu çalışmaya göre, tarımsal küçülme için geçiş döneminde ana aktör toplumsal hareketler olmalıdır. Bu, her düzeydeki uygulamaların çoğulcu evrensellik anlayışı ve tarımsal üretim ile kırsal geçim için agroekolojik uygulamaların benimsenmesi ile desteklenmelidir. Nihai hedef ise Küresel Güney'in küresel kapitalist sistemden ve onun olumsuz sosyal ve çevresel etkilerinden hurûcu, yani kopmasıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarım Sorunu, Eleştirel Tarım Çalışmaları, Küçülme, Ekolojik Kriz, Küresel Güney



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INTRODUCTION

We live in a world with growing contradictions. Humanity has rarely had a more comfortable, luxurious, and advanced period than the one we live in today. Nevertheless, humanity has also rarely experienced a worse period than today, where both planetary and systemic crises are prevalent, and solutions are being overlooked. The contradictory nature of contemporary history has formed the lived realities of many, which demands a firm analytical perspective to make sense of livelihoods at the extreme ends of the spectrum. Climate change, unprecedented ecological damage, rising inequalities, widening wage gaps, rising living costs, high volatility of food prices, and fragile value chains are the defining events of the modern day. They have also manifested themselves lately with COVID-19 and the Ukrainian War. In an economy that is being praised for its ideals of progress, development, and prosperity, the frequency and density of global crises prove the need to revisit and reevaluate the way they have been reproduced.

On the one hand, it is almost undeniable how economic growth ignited progress and prosperity coupled with massive improvements in medicine, food production, education, transportation, and many more that humanity has ever experienced (Jackson, 2021: 4). However, on the other hand, striving for economic growth had become a default global practice; growth could only be delivered in one part of the world at the expense of increasing poverty of others and also creating uneven development of the Global North and the Global South. The limits of growth which have never been considered in terms of the detrimental side effects it could bear have caused massive harm, if not irreversible

damage, to where and how we live. The world has been growing, progressing, and developing, but at what cost?

Gills (2020: 577) lists global crises as being “climate change and ecological breakdown; a systemic crisis of global capitalism and neoliberal economic globalization”, while Kallis, Varvarousis & Petridis (2022: 2) make a similar argument that they are “crisis of ecological breakdown, of inequalities, and a crisis of cares.” Climate crisis is one of the most critical problems, if not the most, modern humans have to deal with, as it has often been called ‘climate urgency.’ It has become a matter of survival for the whole ecosystem, not only because of extreme weather conditions, drought, and worldwide desertification but also for its triggering effect on regional conflicts, and mass migration. Under current conditions, 2 billion people will have to live with extremely hot weather in 50 years (Kemp et al., 2022) while the current economic system is not well-equipped to react and adjust to global “sudden changes,” proven with the context of COVID-19 (Spash, 2021). Vulnerable countries and regions are also the ones who are and will be affected the most by climate change which points to the necessity of situating the Global South at the heart of global discussions and policy change in order to prevent catastrophic events from taking place. Aside from climate change and ecological crisis, global capitalism and neoliberal globalization have long been identified as a source of crisis and instability (Patnaik & Moyo, 2011) by many critical scholars. What differentiates capitalism from other forms of economic organization that are also based on surplus value, exploitation, and extraction is its primary focus on and aim of “perpetual growth” implying “not only surplus, but an exponentially rising surplus” (Hickel, 2021b: 2). The core values of capitalism and neoliberalism have undermined many livelihoods, creating an immense wealth and privilege gap, not only among people but also in the Global North and the Global South. Both ecological breakdown and the crisis of capitalism and neoliberalism disproportionately affect the Global South more and more every day. On the issue of how the Global South is affected, Patnaik and Moyo (2007: 8) list four key elements of the neoliberal policies; i) minimal state spending, ii) opening of the Global South to trade and capital, iii) destructive policies of financial dependence of the Global South and lastly, iv) imposing a particular path to development that excludes peasants and local land ownership.

Most of the discussions on the effects of climate change, ecological breakdown and global economic crisis are carried out over the issues and challenges only the Global North faces, yet the experiences of the Global South often need more attention. The density and the severity of the problems faced by the Global South are also intricately linked to the way recipes developed to solve the North's problems are implemented in the Global South in a one-size-fits-all manner without any regard to its people's demands, social, economic and political differences as they are devoid of both the resources and the visibility in the international arena in which the Global North has the privilege to utilize while seeking and developing recipes for a solution.

The Global South has gone through many, but not necessarily different, cycles of development under the supervision and direction of the Global North throughout centuries. Starting with the European colonialism of the 15th century, the Global South has rebuilt and reshaped its political, economic, and social conditions according to the structures of power constructed by and for the North. Since colonization, economic growth in the Global North had relied on the resources and labor appropriated from the Global South, which implies that starting with violent enslavement followed by extractivism that paved the way for the Industrial Revolution, gave the core states an opportunity to accumulate wealth through exploitation. This pattern of colonial exploitation has been maintained throughout the decades long after colonial powers left their colonies. Present economic and social relations between the core and periphery, in other words, shapeshifted under the mechanisms of international finance and trade. Just as the periphery encounters economic and social problems, the ecological burden arising from excess production, extractivism, and resource depletion is also left for them to bear. The empirical study done by Hickel, Dorninger, Wieland & Suwandi (2022) found that the current extreme levels of consumption and economic growth in the Global North are made possible by the net appropriation of the resources and labor of the Global South through unequal exchange rooted in past colonial practices. Acknowledging unequal exchange between the Global North and the Global South is also a must to address climate justice intertwined with the historical responsibility of the first to the latter and the existence of an 'ecological debt' (Hickel et al., 2022: 2). Also, unequal exchange and appropriation lead to severe poverty, underdevelopment, and ecological

damage, which predominantly impact the vulnerable people of the periphery. The core not only unequally exchanges resources and labor of the periphery but also outsources the environmental damage and burden caused by their consumption levels and patterns. By providing the core states with raw materials, land, energy, and labor, the periphery is left with social, political, ecological, and economic struggles to overcome, including conflicts, dictatorships, and recessions (Martinez-Alier, 2021: 1) where the net appropriation of the resources (raw materials, energy, and land) and labor of the Global South to fulfill the consumption of the Global North could have been “enough to end extreme poverty 70 times over.”

One of the repeating patterns of capitalist production is to devalue the necessary inputs that make production possible, such as human labor, nature, and non-humans. The very reason capitalists devalue them is to externalize the cost of production so that they do not have to pay for it in a literal sense. The hidden cost of getting free labor, natural resources, and other non-humans is left to be shouldered by the enslaved people, workers, nature, and society. The current search for the cheapest labor and resources, since the capitalists can no longer get it for free, has shaped and shifted the legal mechanisms and policymaking practices to work with an inbuilt tendency to favor capitalist production through cheapness, still not recognizing any hidden costs.

On this issue, one of the fundamental scholarly debates in both the critical political economy and ecological economics has been the relationship between how the economy is organized and its impact on the environment. Contemporary issues surrounding environmental degradation, climate change, social movements, and Global South's problems that remain unsolved bring attention to the possible alternatives to the existing system in efforts to meet social and environmental needs. Although there have always been criticisms against the organization of the economy, questions about whether or not the existing system can be improved, transformed, or replaced by an alternative have been more on the agenda not only of the scholars but also of the states, international organizations and the citizens while to what degree they are sincere or successful in their efforts remain questionable.

At the intersection of the way economic activities are organized and how humans relate to the environment, there appears one of the most life-changing activities for humans; agriculture and agricultural production. Although undoubtedly, agriculture has transformed early humans with the domestication of plants and animals while also making settlement possible, this thesis is more concerned with another critical transformation in which agriculture was a part; the historicization of agricultural production and the prominent role agriculture carries at the advent of capitalist transformation, in order to better understand contemporary agriculture and agrarian social relations. In this context, agriculture, for Akram-Lodhi and Kay (2010a: 181), is a “necessary precondition of a more economically prosperous and socially humane society.” For van der Ploeg (2008: 1), it is “the ongoing interaction, intertwinement and mutual transformation of man and living nature.”

Agriculture and rural development within the context of the Global South is a vital issue area and is a matter of survival for the livelihoods of the peasantry. Two challenges are greeting small peasants of the Global South under neoliberal globalization, cheap imports from abroad, and large capitalist farmers at home (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010b). How the international trade, market, and institutions engage with the Global South often comes in the form of privatization, land ownership, non-local, not sustainable, biotechnology-based farming, which results in peasant dispossession, indebtedness, exploitation, ecological damage, and even farmer suicides. Against the issues the peasantry face under capitalism and neoliberal globalization, peasant movements have gained prominence across the Global South, which has also successfully managed to reach the Global North. One such movement, La Via Campesina, has been advocating for farmers and their right to live and produce healthy and local foods on their lands with its members, which consist of 182 organizations in 81 countries (La Via Campesina, 2018b).

From ecological economics (Daly, 2007; Georgescu-Roegen 1971) there are also rising voices against the growth-driven capitalist system under the umbrella of ‘post-growth’ thinking. One of these is degrowth, which has emerged as both an idea and a movement to push the reimagining of alternative societal reorganization that is not centered nor

motivated by economic growth or growth of any kind since the 2000s. Although not all post-growth scenarios are radically anti-capitalist, degrowth certainly is (Gerber, 2020). Its argument is based on the planetary limits; our planet has a material limit. In other words, resources are scarce. Seeking exponential economic growth, or even sustaining the existing growth levels, is impossible as unlimited resources will be needed. Capitalism is in a rush to find new sources of energy and raw materials to sustain its economic growth, and while doing so, irrevocable ecological damage is being done. Climate change and any other planetary crisis we face are, at a deeper level, intricately linked to the quest for more growth. For that, ecological harm and social injustices demand radical action against global capitalism and its dynamics. Degrowth addresses this radical action through degrowing, not the shrinking of the economy as it is, but reorganizing the human-centered economy rather than profit and shrinking the scale of our economic activities. Aside from its reference to the scarce resources and the planetary limits, degrowth is also a critical call for an alternative way of living, a radical political project and a discourse mobilized around the values such as social justice and equality. In this sense, it is safe to argue that degrowth is as much of an economic plan as it is a systemic and multilevel plan to reorganize the whole system of living.

Somewhat surprisingly, degrowth lacks any research on the conditions of agriculture and the peasantry, which the growth imperative and values of global capitalism have contributed significantly to shape. As the rise of the degrowth idea is relatively new, its scholarly scope has remained only dedicated to outlining its general arguments and drawing possible roadmaps, preventing it from delving into specific issue areas such as agriculture and agrifood systems. Its young literature has works, although limited in number, on this problematique, but they have mostly worked on the defining characteristics of the two and possible questions for future research, in which there is no extensive research explaining how agricultural production and a sustainable agrifood system can be reimaged within the degrowth idea and in a possible degrowing society. Against this background, this thesis seeks to address how one locate agriculture in the degrowth idea and movement by bringing elements of the agrarian question into the degrowth literature. Furthermore, it aims to do so with specific reference to what it might imply for the Global South. To do so, the thesis engages within critical agrarian

studies through which questions about the peasantry, land ownership, rural capitalist transition, and rural development are being utilized through a concept from the Marxist thought, ‘the agrarian question.’ Literature on merging the agrarian question with the degrowth discourse does not offer a meaningful body of research to review because the degrowth movement is a relatively new subject that is still in the process of outlining its broader border of research interest.

Regarding the agrarian question, peasants have practiced agriculture dating back to the Middle Ages (Patnaik, 2007: 273) under different economic, political, and social organizations. The importance of agriculture as a sector not only comes from how it is a must for sustaining human lives but also the importance of its prominent role in the emergence of the capitalist economy. Agrarian question, from its history to contemporary interpretations, is a highly diverse and complex conceptual framework that is not only illuminating for the historical trajectory of capitalist development with and within agriculture but also it is a crucial tool to make sense of the current social relations that transforms rural livelihoods and what it implies for their relationship with food production and capital accumulation. The concept’s diverse and nuanced nature enables agrarian question to evolve while new processes, social organizations, and structures occur.

The initial agrarian question stemmed from Marx’s prediction that agriculture as a sector would eventually become fully capitalist. At the same time, the peasantry class would be replaced by the capitalist landowners and farmers. Despite this vision being true for other sectors, agriculture did not become fully capitalist, and the peasantry prevailed as a class and a key actor in the global economy. This contradiction paved the way for the emergence of “the agrarian question.” From Lenin to Kautsky, many came up with different explanations for how agriculture stood firm against the capitalist mode of production. Later, however, the agrarian question corresponded to the modern problems within agrarian relations. What accounts for the revival of the agrarian question is mainly the consequence of widespread decolonization attempts followed by national liberation movements starting from the 1970s. These attempts from the Global South, which show a clear diversion from the liberal capitalist system, shaped the responses

from the Global North and its institutions. Revival of the concept was intricately linked to discourses around development, national reforms, independence, and autonomy which were popular among the scholars of the Global South (Watts, 2021: 58). For instance, the World Bank's sudden and heavy interest in offering recipes for development for the countries of the Global South in the 1980s to reintegrate them back into the global capitalist economy, also considering the rise of neoliberal globalization, contributed to the critical agrarian studies to be back on the agenda, while the agrarian question being one of those popular research matters.

The agrarian question, which concerns the critique of the capitalist path to rural development and ways in which this critique can be transformed into meaningful proposals for an alternative, is a very similar yet undiscovered research area for degrowth. Mainly associated with the socialist transition and peasant liberation, the agrarian question lays the foundation of an alternative path to rural development in the Global South. In that sense, the centrality of agriculture and food to capitalist production poses an excellent opportunity to revisit the agrarian question from a degrowth perspective with the help of the existing problematique of capitalist growth.

Undoubtedly, growth is an essential part of capitalism which has become the norm in the functioning of economic activities. The strong faith in and widespread narrative around the continued expansion of the economy for the sake of human and societal progress, which Jackson (2021) calls “the myth of growth” (p.3), is one of the basic principles of the modern world in which every structure has been built on. With rising awareness of the environmental crisis, growth has also found itself in more environmentally-conscious policy frameworks, namely green growth. However, this line of thinking created a counter-movement, post-growth, which identifies the current challenges rooted in the limitless growth mindset and calls for abandoning growth and its indicators, building a human-centered economy in efforts to comply with the planetary limits and human wellbeing. The proposals coming from post-growth signify not only an economic reorganization but a societal regeneration as the capitalist growth ideal has shaped and shifted the trajectory of the world for centuries. As one of the post-growth approaches, degrowth, calls for “an equitable downscaling of production and consumption that

increases human wellbeing and enhances ecological conditions at the local and global level, in the short and long term (Schneider, Kallis & Martinez-Alier, 2010: 512). Jackson (2021: 4) argues that the obsession with overproduction and consumption that is costly to earth and the peoples of the Global South, which led to not real but only ‘material progress,’ must be replaced with other alternatives that will provide “the conditions under which we thrive” (2021: 5) as humanity.

This thesis sees the agrarian question and degrowth as potentially having many common grounds where both sides can benefit and learn from each other; the critique of the implications of capitalist growth, sovereign food production, sustainable and green agricultural practices, and democracy. Agriculture, food, and land are highly relevant topics regarding the current global crises regarding food security/sovereignty, climate change, and the industrialization of agriculture. Degrowth signifies a shift away from the growth-focused understanding of development and rather sees economic growth as the sole cause of the inherent and recurring crisis of the current social and economic system. In that sense, this thesis argues that it will be a timely and significant step forward to incorporate these two issues into research by creating a nexus between theory and practice. Towards the end, the thesis will aim to explore theoretical and conceptual opportunities to broaden degrowth and its perspective on the agrarian relations of the Global South by drawing on the agrarian question from a world systemic framework. While the works on degrowth are often attributed to solving the climate crisis and environmental harm, the actors of agrarian social relations, the peasantry, and accompanying elements, land, capital, and resources, may also play an essential role in influencing the implementation and development of degrowth vision.

To proceed in bringing elements of the agrarian question into the context of degrowth, this thesis will necessarily be exploratory in nature. Not only is degrowth a relatively new area of research but expanding it beyond the current body of research with the agrarian question will imply addressing questions that have not been asked before at the theoretical level. While doing so, this thesis aims to go beyond existing works by using them as building blocks to construct a new research ground. This thesis will benefit from and take the literature on both degrowth and the agrarian question as its point of

departure, and subsequently develop its own arguments and assessments in effort to contribute to a new literature being developed. Consequently, this thesis will make use of books, articles, journals, and other published works on the agrarian question and degrowth as secondary sources, to generate a basis for argumentation.

As one of the essential pillars of this thesis, critical agrarian studies will enable agrarian and social change to be worked on from a broad range of dimensions and perspectives in understanding the link between rural livelihoods and social, political, and economic structures. In doing so, critical agrarian studies incorporate gender, race, and any other signifier of social identity into their analyses. In contrast, agrarian Marxism solely utilizes class analysis which may render their work short-sighted. Not only the agrarian question is underexplored in degrowth; critical agrarian studies as a whole have also not been particularly popular among degrowthers and “the bridges have so far remained too rare” between the two (Gerber, 2020: 236).

Aside from Introduction and Conclusion, this thesis comprises four main chapters. In the first chapter, the agrarian question will be examined, and its literature will be reviewed; global agrarian relations will be historicized in order to make sense of the concept and how it came to be one of the significant points of discussion in the literature on the capitalist transformation and the whole of the critical agrarian studies. Historicizing agrarian relations will also help to delve more into the concept’s real-life reflections, which is crucial to make sense of contemporary agrarian relations. In this chapter, a historical analysis of the growth-driven development strategies which have played a role in the capitalist transition of the Global North will be problematized in efforts to analyze to what extent the growth mindset has influenced the contemporary agrarian relations in the countryside in terms of land and peasant labor in addition to the dominance of multinational corporations in the agricultural sector, poverty elimination and rural development. The main focus will be on the Global South as its primary source of income comes from the agricultural sector, and it has been subjected to external policy interventions coming from the Global North together with its vulnerability to the effects of climate change, global economic crisis, and price fluctuations. What has been the norm in rural development policies is to privatize and modernize both the land and the

agricultural production without acknowledging the rural voices. In that sense, this chapter aims to make sense of the way in which the agrarian question can help understand the patterns of production, distribution, and consumption of food in relation to the Global South and rural development.

The second chapter will address the alternative responses to the current “food crisis”, from mainstream and critical voices. Mainstream responses regarding the Global South’s development with its agrarian relations have been favored by most of the key international organizations and states with a heavy emphasis on privatization, modernization, technology, and efficiency. These responses’ main feature is that they are reformist in character; mainstream does not engage in any thoughts about a radical transformation of the system for a better future. They argue that the existing system works well but needs adjustments and a few changes from time to time to how it operates. However, the critical responses emerged as a resistance to the system by advocating for land reform, sovereignty, and people’s liberation. They advocate for radical systemic change; thus, they are revolutionists in character and see the real problem as the system itself.

The third chapter is dedicated to degrowth, which will be framed both as a reaction to the “growth paradigm” and a prominent alternative to the existing organization of the economy with its emergence and development as a new area of concern. Degrowth, both as a theory and policy framework, requires deliberate exploration of crucial and legitimate questions. This chapter will set the scene for the emergence of degrowth by providing insights on the growth paradigm and will slowly make its way to post-growth thinking, thus degrowth. Next, as the idea of degrowth being born within the confines of Western thinking raises legitimate questions about what it means for the other parts of the world and how sincere it is in its decolonial and anticapitalist aims, degrowth will be assessed in relations to its existing literature and criticisms it has attracted so far. In this sense, the third chapter explores degrowth thoroughly.

The fourth chapter will be dedicated to connecting both pieces of literature as ‘agrarian degrowth’ through its proposal ‘agrarianization of degrowth’ while acknowledging their commonalities on a theoretical level. For this case, critical engagement with a small

number of works will be provided. The alternatives offered to the existing agrarian system will be assessed both proposed by the agrarian question and degrowth scholars. Although the intersection of both pieces of literature points to a direction where local and small-scale agricultural production and smaller food systems seem to generate answers to hunger, rural poverty, energy use, and development, it is also essential to consider environmental justice, gender/race equality, nutrition, sustainability, indigenous knowledge, and overall human well-being. In this sense, this chapter will aim to generate a new framework for alternative agrarian systems while assessing the existing proposals. This chapter will also start a debate on imagining the future of the agrarian relations of the Global South in the case of continued capitalist expansion and growth through social movements, pluriversality, agroecology, and delinking.

The concluding chapter will summarize the thesis' main arguments to fully imagine agrarian degrowth for the Global South based on a paradigm shift. The conclusion chapter is based on the alternative path through social movements and delinking of the Global South from the world capitalist economy while adopting sustainable agroecological agricultural practices tailored to the needs of different communities.

CHAPTER 1

EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AGRARIAN QUESTION

1.1. Introduction

The transition from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist mode of production has been one of the most significant turning points in history. During the Industrial Revolution, every sector experienced radical changes in terms of utilizing labor, means of production, and pattern of accumulation for surplus generation. The sectors which could not be tailored to adapt to the capitalist system did not survive and disappeared in time. However, contrary to expectations, agriculture did not become fully capitalist and it managed to maintain its pre-capitalist elements to some degree, namely the peasantry. In this contradiction, there emerged “the agrarian question.” There have been many scholarly attempts to make sense of this unexpected turn in agriculture, yet the agrarian question does not have a clear-cut single definition or answer to it (Akram-Lodhi, Dietz, Engels & McKay, 2021; Bahn and Zurayk, 2018). Gerber (2020: 235) defines it as being “about the deployment of capitalist growth in the countryside and about how to transition to egalitarian alternatives” while Watts (2021: 53) argues that the concept is to question “whether and how agriculture provides surpluses over and above subsistence; the differing forms of

agrarian production; and the relations between agriculture and the accumulation of capital, between land-based resources and empire.” Byres (1995: 507), on the other hand, holds that it is “the continuing existence in the countryside of poor countries of substantive obstacles to an unleashing of the forces capable of generating economic development, both inside and outside agriculture.”

In broad terms, the emergence of “the agrarian question” started with the aim of understanding the emergence and development of capitalism and the transition from pre-capitalist mode of production to capitalist production, specifically in agriculture. In the literature, the agrarian question is, as a whole, composed of the classical agrarian question, and new agrarian question(s) (Bahn and Zurayk, 2018); the former concerning the initial capitalist transformation and its implications for the rural livelihoods in historical context, and the latter problematizing the current events in order to better understand the changing rural social relations vis-à-vis the evolving capitalist structure under neoliberal globalization while also attempting to challenge the mainstream understanding of development by focusing on collective peasant struggles. This chapter will start with a general overview of the concept and what it corresponds to in terms of its content and categorization within the critical agrarian literature. The next section will be the literature review followed by the examination of the current status of the agrarian question and its seven different variants generated by the scholars of agrarian change.

1.2. The Classical Agrarian Question

The emergence of the agrarian question started with Marx’s 1867 book *Capital* and his analysis of primitive accumulation which demonstrated the origins of capital accumulation and the role of agriculture in the capitalist transition. In *Capital*’s Part 8 entitled “So-Called Primitive Accumulation,” Marx explained the historical process of primitive accumulation that made capitalism “stand on its own feet” (1867/1976: 874). According to him, the act of enclosure of land left the peasantry displaced from their land, which Akram-Lodhi and Kay (2010a: 183) argue is the very first time that a class was being deprived of their own means of production. At this juncture, displaced peasants commodified their labor to be the wage laborers needed to further capitalist development in cities and towns (Byres, 1995: 507). Following this analysis, Marx

claimed that the necessary wage laborers would be taken over mainly by the displaced peasants. This process, he argues, would wipe out the pre-capitalist agrarian production and the peasantry; “partly because (...) specialized skill is rendered worthless by new methods of production” (Marx & Engels, 1848/2008: 16). However, this anticipation was later proved lacking and provided that peasants, wage laborers, and capitalist farms in fact do coexist under the global capitalist system. The significance of this coexistence is the way in which pre-capitalist peasant farming managed to “survive in a capitalist setting” (Özgür & Kaya, 2018: 231) where sectors other than agriculture fully transformed into their capitalist alternative, unlike what Marx envisaged in his theory of development. This puzzle led to the emergence of the agrarian question for Marxist scholars. Byres (2012: 13) calls this coexistence as being the product of “incomplete capitalist transition” which changes the trajectory of social and political life where the agrarian question exists. Kautsky (1899/1988: 22, as cited in Özgür & Kaya, 2018: 233), on the other hand, brought an explanation to this puzzle by indicating that agriculture “follows its own laws of development, which are different from those of industry” as “agriculture has its own laws of development which are not subject to the Marx’s laws of concentration of capital” (Love, 1996: 62-3 as cited in Özgür & Kaya, 2018: 233).

According to Akram-Lodhi et al. (2021: 26), besides primitive accumulation, Marx outlined two other different “paths of transition from pre-capitalist farming to peasant farming subsumed to capitalism.” The second path of transition, ‘peasant class differentiation’, draws attention to the ways in which wage laborers who could not afford to rent land on their own were forced to work for the tenant farmers. This exploitation was one of the ways of accumulating capital by the tenant farmers who were, as Marx defined, “future capitalists” (Marx, 1894/1981: 935, as cited in Akram-Lodhi et al., 2021: 26). This divergence within the peasantry around the commodification of labor created class differentiation. The third and final path imagined by Marx was the common ownership of the land by the peasants in order to produce for the needs of that local community. In addition, Marx also outlined this path in a way to be supported on the national level, namely by the state, without any concerns over profit, accumulation, and wealth generation. However, in all three cases, Marx saw pre-capitalist agrarian production to be eradicated by the capitalist mode of production.

Agriculture as the outlier case and its resistance to full capitalist transition demanded an explanation as to how agrarian relations of production managed to survive the capitalist transition. Marx's main theorization of agrarian change in the emergence of capitalism emphasized the processes in which agrarian capital transformed from pre-capitalist peasant farming to capitalist peasant production (Akram-Lodhi et al., 2021 p. 26) which points to the understanding of the agrarian question as the "agrarian question of capital" (Bernstein, 2006). However, Kautsky (1899/1988: 3) noted that Marx only wrote on capitalist agriculture and how it would inevitably surrender to capitalism, although it was not extensive and systemic (Patnaik, 2007: 262). As a result, the agrarian question emerged to "deal with the ways and methods of eradicating pre-capitalist agricultural relations of production that survive in a capitalist setting" (Özgür & Kaya, 2018: 231).

Aside from the initial discussion on agrarian change based on the works of Marx, the core discussions of the classical agrarian question can be divided into three problematics produced by i) Engels, ii) Kautsky and Lenin, and iii) Preobrazhensky (Bahn & Zurayk, 2018; Bernstein 2006; Moyo, Jha & Yeros, 2013). According to these three streams of work, each has prioritized one dimension (political, social, or economic) of the agrarian question over the others.

1.2.1. Three Problematics

Engels wrote his book in 1894, *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*, in which he discussed the conditions of small European peasantry in the capitalist transformation. What Engels problematized in his book was the consequences of the imperialist extension of capitalist development which rendered European peasants vulnerable to the cheap grains imported from the colonial lands (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010a). As a response, he suggested that European peasants realize their political agency against competitive forces of international trade in a way that would also prevent any possible conflicting interests arising from peasant class differentiation for which "neither capitalist exploiter nor disposed proletarian, the peasant farmer occupied a politically ambiguous space" (Watts, 2021: 54) which suffices to argue that Engels dealt with the political dimension of the agrarian question. However, Engels shared very similar anticipation on the future of agrarian social relations with Marx; peasants would not be

able to resist the dynamics of global capitalism; they were “hopelessly doomed” and could only be “a future proletariat” (Engels, 1894/1951, as cited in Watts, 2021: 54).

However, the agrarian question again became "the agrarian question of capital" (Bernstein, 2004; 2016) with Kautsky's 1899 book *The Agrarian Question* and Lenin's 1899 book *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*. Kautsky was also the first scholar to use the term ‘agrarian question’ (Akram-Lodhi et al., 2021: 281) and the first to do a “systematic and scientific investigation” of the concept (Patnaik, 2007: 269). He defined the agrarian question as the question of “whether, and how, capital is seizing hold of agriculture, revolutionizing it, making old forms of production and property untenable and creating the necessity for new ones” (1899/1988: 12). He was skeptical of Marx and Engels' writings on agrarian transition, arguing that their analyses were fixated on the small peasants and their futures without engaging in the complex social and political mechanisms that forced peasants from their lands to be wage laborers in towns while leaving land and food production to the large landowners where needed surplus for the industry and agrarian accumulation was generated. For that matter, he argued that agrarian surplus was essential to capitalists by exploring how capital was able to transform, shape, and shift agriculture despite the way that the capitalist mode of production was focused more on the industry in urban areas while "leaving agriculture largely undisturbed (...)" (Kautsky, 1899/1988: 13). Kautsky's attention was on the agriculture-industry relationship (Watts, 2021: 54) in which he argued that the agrarian capitalist transition would take way longer than Marx had thought, thus a pre-capitalist mode of production in agriculture could live under capitalism during this complex and long transition. However, he also argued that small peasantry would experience inevitable struggle under the rules of the industry and modern agricultural production for its competitive prices generated through specialization, large-scale production, international markets, and technological advancements (Kautsky, 1899/1988). Then again, his focal point of discussion was “the role of pre-capitalist and non-capitalist forms of agriculture within capitalist society” (1899/1988: 3).

In addition, Kautsky considered agriculture as a unique terrain that is also home to its impediment to modernization; climate, seasons, and struggles around mechanization

which he believed made agriculture “undesirable for capital” (Watts, 2021: 55). Going back to Marx’s anticipation that pre-capitalist agrarian production would disappear, Kautsky further explained the reasons why it failed to do so by referring to the nature of agrarian production:

“The prime distinction is that in industry it is possible to multiply the means of production at will: in agriculture, the decisive means of production, the land, constitutes a fixed magnitude under given circumstances and cannot be increased at will” (1899/1988: 145).

On a very similar note, which also proves the analytical relevance of Kautsky, Goodman and Watts (1997: 1) stated that agriculture “confronts capitalism as a natural production process” through which capitalism is not capable of controlling, thus erasing, everything that is naturally occurring and has a direct implication on the agrarian production. Weather, soil, limits to fertility, and constraints around mechanization can be mitigated by capitalism to a certain degree. In this sense, they argue, agriculture will always be in conflict with capitalism with its unavoidable impediments to full capitalist transition (Goodman & Watts, 1997.)

Lenin’s 1899 book, *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* seems to agree with Kautsky. The biggest difference, however, is that Lenin emphasized landed property as being central to the socialist transformation as a means of developing small rural peasants as opposed to Kautsky’s emphasis on the importance of capital. According to Akram-Lodhi et al. (2021: 28), Lenin listed the “principles of capitalism” as being “expansion, innovation and the lowering of unit costs through scale economies” while explaining how they contributed to the cheapening of the agrarian products in a way that peasants cannot compete. This, in fact, limited the options for peasants if they wanted to sustain their lives. They could either adopt the capitalist mode of production with high commodification of agricultural products and specialization, or they could be wage laborers working for landowners. These categories of peasants are what Marx identified as “accumulating peasant households” whose main impetus for production was accumulation. Although these two options rendered rural livelihoods vulnerable to the rules of the market, the third option was to resist this capitalist transformation until they

could no longer get their needs met for survival which Marx called “deficit peasant households.” This also comes to show that Lenin’s arguments were based on peasant class differentiation. He listed three peasant classes; rich, middle, and poor peasants; his envision was that capitalist transition would eventually transform these three peasant classes “into classes of agrarian capital (rich peasants) and proletarian labor (poor peasants), with a minority of middle peasants joining the ranks of the former and the majority joining the ranks of the latter” (Bernstein, 2009: 58).

The last key contribution to the classical agrarian question was from Preobrazhensky, with his book *The New Economics* (1926/1965), whose analysis was heavily focused on the economic side of the agrarian question. His most influential take on the agrarian question was his concept of “primitive socialist accumulation” which he developed by drawing insights from Marx’s concept of primitive accumulation (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010a: 194). In his understanding of the question, agriculture is the one and only sector for surplus capital accumulation to enable and carry socialist industrialization and, in the end, the socialist revolution. According to Preobrazhensky, the state should be the only actor that is able and willing to accumulate agrarian surplus and impose taxation to fund socialist industrialization. What this work on the agrarian question was concerned about, different from the first two, is the agricultural capital’s ability to contribute to socialist industrialization (Bernstein, 1996) without any mention of class struggles, the political agency of the peasants, and the capitalist development of the rural.

1.3. The ‘New’ Agrarian Question(s)

The significance of the initial agrarian question is the problematization of primitive accumulation, which located agrarian land-capital-labor relation at the center of its arguments that fueled capitalist industrial development. However, profound global changes and developments have necessitated “the rebirth of the agrarian question” (Watts, 2021: 57). These changes included the transnationalization of capital, globalization, the rise of neoliberalism, peasant/farmer movements, and many more shifts in political, economic, and social dynamics. Watts (2021) goes on to argue that the historical process of the ‘rebirth’ started with the decolonization period of the 1950s and

1960s followed by newly independent states' pursuit of national autonomy, revolutionary and anti-imperialist discourses of the Cold War which located peasantry and agrarian production at the heart of the resistance, and social movements. What is more, Watts (2021: 58) adds, rising scholarly interest in dependency theory, world-system theory, post-colonial, gender and ecology literature together with the increasing visibility of the knowledge production by the Global South further strengthened the need for new discussions around the agrarian question. Along similar lines, the most recent developments of intensified neoliberal globalization and the wave it created regarding financial crises, sharp price changes in food, climate crisis, land grabs, privatization, and increasing rates of peasant suicide have only proved the necessity of the agrarian question and the ways in which it must be renewed and diversified.

1.3.1. What is new in the 'new' Agrarian Question?

Looking back to the classical agrarian question, Moyo et al. (2013: 95) argued that the origins of the agrarian question were taken as if it was the "agrarian question of industrialization" in the sense that their analyses of the agrarian question considered industrialization "as the prescribed remedy" necessary to catch up with industrialized countries and treated the small-scale agricultural production as a sign of "backwardness." Likewise, while historicizing the emergence of capitalism, the classical works on the agrarian question saw the mass displacement of small peasants from their lands "as a necessary condition for development" (Patnaik, 2021: 45). Contemporary debates, however, challenge the classical development path that Western Europe followed and do not take the backwardness-industrialization spectrum as given (Patnaik, 2021, p. 45); rather, they attempt to generate patterns from the historical experiences and diversify the agrarian question with issues of ecology, gender, social justice, and peasant liberation (Moyo et al. 2013). As a result, McMichael (2013: 68) argues, the agrarian question has transformed from being "a political question in economic terms" to being the issue of neither capital nor labor but of peasant struggles over land in the Global South with the questions of who is the peasant/farmer, how do they engage in agriculture, to what extent they are bound by the market rules and food systems and in

what ways peasants/farmers can create alternative agrifood systems that do not marginalize them.

Another key criticism made against the classical works on the agrarian question is how their analyses were centered on the ways in which European social, economic and political context led to this capitalist agrarian transformation, lacking any external influence, namely imperialism, that had contributed to this process. Additionally, they often omit the importance of the “colonial transfers” of goods produced in colonized lands with slave labor and forced taxation collected from the colonies (Patnaik, 2021: 46) in European industrialization, which formed, what Patnaik calls (2021), “external primitive accumulation.” Contrary to the works which show the transition from small peasant farming to large agricultural production and the formation of new capitalist classes established the primitive accumulation needed for industrialization, Patnaik (2006) states that the revenue created from the colonial trade helped domestic accumulation to fully directed to Industrial Revolution, if not funded it for the most part. What this means for the Global South is that extraction and appropriation of their resources, capital, and labor followed by external political and economic oppression not only affected their livelihoods disproportionately, created a dependency that has impeded their development, but it also made the Global North’s industrialization possible.

Along similar lines, Moyo et al. (2013) claim that Engels and Kautsky remained limited in their analyses by only assessing the conditions and future of the small peasantry in capitalist transition, agrarian capitalism, and its political implications. They did not see the agrarian question through the lens of the international division of labor which exhausted, exploited, and impoverished the Global South. Samir Amin, however, has been one of the key scholars who worked on filling this gap by writing on the conditions of the Global South, and their liberation path, which, he argues, is socialism.

Amin has contributed to the agrarian question literature in the sense that although local and national readings of the agrarian question are necessary, it is equally critical to establish a global framework that considers colonialism and globalization as active mechanisms that have helped capitalist transformation to take place and reproduce itself.

Samir Amin extensively wrote on imperialism, struggles of the Global South, and development by contributing to the dependency theory, which explains the colonial and exploitative reliance of the core on the periphery and its resources. Amin (2017: 149) identified the agrarian question as being “the key issue to be addressed in the processes of building socialism in the twenty-first century.” He centered his analysis on the role and influence of the agrarian question in the revolutions of the Global South which is home to the biggest peasant population. Amin (2011: 117; 2017: 167) claimed that Kautsky saw capitalism as the answer to the agrarian question, but he was consistent in his arguments over the claim that capitalism is not capable of resolving the agrarian question in the South. He maintained that “while it (capitalism) solved the question in its centers, did so by creating a gigantic agrarian question in the peripheries, which it cannot solve but through the genocide of half of humankind” (Amin, 2012: 14). Amin’s (2017: 156) recipe for the agrarian question was to adopt world socialism with multilayered regulations to reorganize the relations peasants have with the market to ensure food sovereignty and prioritize national production for national independence.

Another criticism Amin (2017) made of Kautsky was his false envisioning that the benefits of technological advancement, division of labor, and specialization would eventually render large-scale agricultural production efficient and profitable, leading to the demise of small-family farming. For him, not only did this scenario never happen, on the contrary, family farming is still prevalent throughout the Global North. In addition, profitability has not been generated only through technological advancement, division of labor, and specialization but has also been “obtained through ecological waste (irreversible destruction of productive potential and of arable land), as well as social exploitation (miserable wages)” (2017: 154). To elaborate, Amin (2017: 151) made a significant differentiation between “capitalist agriculture” and “agriculture under capitalism.” According to him, modern family farming –owning or renting the land and using the labor of family members/seasonal workers - that is widespread in Europe and the US is not entirely capitalistic given that the clear-cut division of labor established among the factory workers does not apply to modern family farmers who own the capital but also use their labor for market purposes with modern equipment and government support while remaining essential for the functioning of the world capitalist

economy. He also compared modern family farming to the Global South's family (peasant) farming, in which not only do most of the peasants lack ownership of land, but they also have little to no access to necessary equipment, know-how, and financial support. Moreover, what they grow and harvest is what they can eat; making agriculture as a sector, more vital for the Global South's small peasants than it is for the modern family farmers in the Global North. Adding to the existing debate, as far as current conditions of the peasantry are concerned, Watts (2021: 61) argues that most of the peasants are not peasants in a way that we are familiar with from a world-historical lens; they have become “semi-proletarianized rural producers” through the process by which they are unable to live off of farming, cannot compete with large-scale production and their main stream of income comes from non-farming jobs.

1.3.2. Counter arguments

However, there is a debate over the state of the agrarian question and whether it is still relevant for the Global South. Works by two prominent scholars, Byres and Bernstein, are fundamental to understanding this “counter-discourse” (Watts, 2021: 61). According to Byres (1995: 507), the agrarian question “represents a failure of accumulation to proceed adequately in the countryside- that impinging powerfully upon the tow; an intimately related failure of class formation in the countryside, appropriate to that accumulation; and a failure of the state to successfully mediate those transitions, which we may encapsulate as the agrarian transition” and in its simplest form, is the question of “backwardness.” By reframing the agrarian question as “agrarian transition” (Bernstein, 1996: 25), Byres (1995) claims that industrial and bourgeoisie supported social transformation/agrarian transition would eventually solve the agrarian question through transforming agriculture into a fully capitalist sector. In this sense, in order to fully grasp the central problem pertaining to the agrarian question and imagine alternative scenarios of agrarian transition, one has to go beyond the analysis of uneven class formation in the countryside and delve into the political, economic, and social consequences of this rural dynamic. Thus, Byres rejects the relevance of the agrarian question for the Global North for its “overwhelming dominance of industry and the urban bourgeoisie” (Hendricks, 2014: 285).

The second counter-discourse comes from the works of Bernstein (2004). For him, primitive accumulation is directly linked to the significance of capital accumulation in agriculture, which made the agrarian question "the agrarian question of capital." While this is the case, some scholars argue that agrarian surplus did not have that much of a radical effect in fueling industrial growth as Ellman (1975) shows in his research where the USSR's First Five Year Plan did not generate the expected results in further industrialization. Mundle (1985: 76) also did a comparative analysis of post-restoration Japan and post-independence India and found that while European agrarian surplus – whether it is generated from European small peasant farmers or colonial activities, did financialize the development of the industry; for the Global South, it was the "rates of productivity growth and population growth in agriculture" which he argued, was the reason why the Southern agrarian experiences failed at "successful industrialization." Under current conditions, Bernstein (1996, 2006, 2009) offers a different account and no longer sees agriculture as a must for capital accumulation to fuel industrialization simply because non-agrarian "external sources of accumulation" (Bernstein, 1996: 32) exist and global capitalism has no difficulty in mobilizing capital from one place to another in order for industrialization to expand and intensify. As the Global South is wholly integrated into the world market, he adds, it does not "require productive agriculture in order to facilitate accumulation" (Carlson, 2017: 705). Hence, Bernstein claims that the agrarian question of capital has lost its relevance for the Global South and North under global capitalism (Watts, 2021: 61).

1.4. Current Crises and the Agrarian Question(s)

Despite counter debates, many do not doubt that the agrarian question is very much alive and "has assumed a new relevance" (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010b: 279), "occupies center-stage among all issues of political economy" (Patnaik & Moyo, 2011: 47) and "has not been resolved even for the developed countries" (Bahn & Zurayk, 2018: 17), let alone the Global South. Among those, one of the most revolutionary contributions to the agrarian question in terms of its close relation to food and international trade has come from Friedmann and McMichael (1989) with their food regime theory which aims to assess the "strategic role of agriculture and food in the construction of the world

capitalist economy," (McMichael, 2009a: 139) through the historical categorization of "stable periods of capital accumulation" (McMichael, 2009a: 139). The importance of the food regime theory is linked to the changing character of the agrarian question. McMichael (2005: 276) argued that the question is long overdue being about capital and labor because of the "instrumental role of food in securing global hegemony." The first food regime is argued to fall between 1870 and 1914, emerging out of the British hegemony with its dynamic trade relationship with its colonies. The second food regime is characterized by the industrialization of agriculture in which food became a value-added good with the emergence of agrobusinesses in the international market during the height of developmentalist policies between 1945 to 1973; however, what determines the outlines of this food regime is the US hegemony coupled with its mass production of cheap manufactured foods and food aids (mostly with cheap wheat) to Global South against the communist threat. However, not only did food aids burden the local farmers in the periphery, making it hard to compete with the lower prices, it also did not solve food insecurity, which was one of the main vulnerabilities that characterized the postwar era; but rather made them dependent on agro-exports.

From the 1980s to the 2000s, the third food regime, the neoliberal corporate food regime, emerged from the harsh and deliberate application of the neoliberal policies imposed on agriculture, shifting the focus from nation-states to rules of the global market. The main idea was to 'develop' and 'modernize' the Global South after the 1980s debt crisis with the neoliberal project, paving the way for Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by neoliberal institutions which demanded the integration of the periphery into the world market and left peasants unable to cope with the low prices that the Global North offered with mass production and government subsidies. This neoliberal process resulted in increased peasant debts, land loss, dependency on agro-exports, and increasing poverty. Lastly, the corporate food regime (McMichael, 2009a) signifies the fourth food regime prevalent since the beginning of the 2000s, which can be thought of as another form of neoliberal food regime that is more ecology centered. The increasing concerns about climate change, health, environment, and their links to capitalist production, overconsumption, and growth mindset voiced and led by the social movements and public reactions made corporations, states, and institutions discover new

ways to reorganize their productions, investments, and policy choices. However, this has not led them to be ecologically, socially, and financially responsible, rather pressures to be more environmental have made them green wash their activities, making false impressions on how they leave their old, harmful ways of producing and exploiting without making any meaningful change in reality. Another feature of the corporate food regime points to “institutionalizing corporate power in the world food system” (McMichael, 2009a: 153) to the extent that corporations have become the sole decision-maker who has the power to construct, shape, and change the diets of people, direct global trends, manage what and how much to produce in addition to creating class-based consumption patterns. The rising demand and promotion for environmentally conscious, organic, fresh, and “healthy” foods are the direct consequence of “converging environmental politics and the reorganization of retailing food supply chains, subdivided by class diets” (McMichael, 2009a: 154).

Food regime theory is not reducible to the trends and patterns of production and consumption of agricultural products; it also takes farmers/peasants, workers, and consumers in addition to social movements into consideration besides the big actors-states, international organizations, and corporations. In order to make sense of each food regime, they should be seen as part of a continuous flow of periods with smooth transitions in between, each being highly influenced by the previous one in a way that they are all connected and regardless of the time, each regime shows significant features of the first food regime in itself, namely, capital accumulation through exploitation, colonialism, and imperialism. The fact that the first and the last food regime are remarkably different yet undeniably similar points to a direction where the capital and power relations are consistent throughout history, but actors are subject to change. However, in explaining the agrarian question, food regime theory offers an alternative agrifood system that is ecologically and socially just. The lacking side of this theory to solve the agrarian question is that the regimes are divided based on world-historical patterns, making it too universalist (Niederle, 2018) to apply to the local experiences that adopt different indigenous practices and systems to survive in the Global South.

Another key turning point in the agrarian question came with social movements, described as the "engines of regime crisis and formation" (Friedmann, 2005: 229). The collective peasant movements demand detachment from the neoliberal system and they have been mobilized for better living conditions to take their land back from the agribusinesses and their rights to determine how to produce food. This current collective struggle made the agrarian question the "agrarian question of the peasant struggles." One of the biggest and leading peasant movements La Via Campesina (International Peasant Movement), founded in 1993 came up with the concept of "food sovereignty," which is recognized "as the archetypal 'countermovement'" also by food regime analysis. It is defined as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (La Via Campesina, 2007 as cited in Patel, 2009: 666). As social movements have already changed the trajectory of the food regimes with the peasants against neoliberal policies, Friedmann (2005) argues that environmental movements are also key determinants of the corporate food regime.

1.4.1. Seven Variants

After examining contemporary debates on the agrarian question, Akram-Lodhi and Kay's work "Surveying the agrarian question" (2010a, 2010b) is a very significant attempt to systematically and comprehensively bring variants of the new agrarian question(s) together. They identify "seven current variants of the agrarian question" (2010b: 255) for the purpose of understanding how neoliberal globalization has reshaped the role of peasantry and capital organization. They argue that these seven variants are the direct outcome of "the lack of a clearly singular and unique explanatory variable that resolves the agrarian question" (2010b: 263) in the sense that solutions to the agrarian question have been imagined through country-specific accounts of how said country carried capitalist transformation, in what ways it led or was forced to undertake such transition, and how the social relations in that society responded to the capitalist mode of production under neoliberal globalization. According to their analysis, they list the seven agrarian questions as class forces (AQ1), path-dependent (AQ2), decoupled (AQ3),

global reserve army (AQ4), corporate food regime (AQ5), gender (AQ6), and ecology (AQ7).

The first agrarian question variant class forces (AQ1) rests on the works of Byres (1991a; 1991b; 2003; 2006). It suggests that class forces are the main driver of agrarian change. AQ1 offers a framework in which rural capitalist transition is dependent on country-specific variables. According to this argument, Global North and the Global South followed different ways of developing their rural capital accumulation and experienced different transitional periods to rural capitalism with the involvement of different actors. These differing historical experiences, which can be also evident between two countries within the same global block, are also linked to Marx's and Lenin's analyses of peasant class differentiation. To give an example, Asia and Africa experienced a 'from above' transition to capitalist relations of production led and enforced by the North whereas Europe adopted a 'from below' transition from feudal lord to landowners. Although the core of the agrarian question is composed of issues around capital accumulation, conditions of the peasantry, and land, the theoretical analysis of the agrarian question in Africa today vis-à-vis that of Europe will demand different questions to be answered based on historical differences. In this sense, AQ1 holds that any resolution to the agrarian question will be "highly contingent and is embedded within historical trajectories of variation" (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010b: 266).

Path-dependent (AQ2) variant, on the other hand, sees the commodification of labor as the driver of rural capitalism, and capital accumulation. According to Warren (1980), it was the development of capitalist relations of production and primitive accumulation that forced peasants to commodify their labor. The processes by which peasants have been displaced from their lands and become wage laborers are the sources of rural accumulation. Wage labor also ensures the continuity of capitalist relations of production, as part of a vicious cycle. According to this framing, rural capitalism is "path dependent and hence inevitable" (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010b: 267).

Decoupled (AQ3) variant of the agrarian question is based on the differentiation made by Bernstein (1996, 2006, 2010) between the agrarian question of capital and the agrarian question of labor. According to Bernstein, the agrarian question of capital has

come to an end with globalization. Agriculture has lost its power over the capital in the sense that transnationalization of capital undermined the importance of rural accumulation for industrialization. Under current circumstances, it is not much about the process by which each country is able to accumulate capital in their countryside to transfer the surplus to industrialized towns; capital now flows without any concerns over borders and can be mobilized rather quickly. However, it is the agrarian question of labor that is still relevant for rural livelihoods and their struggle for survival under globalization. This capital-labor relationship addresses divergence in which “transnational capital has become decoupled from national labor regimes” (Bahn & Zurayk, 2018: 15).

Global reserve army (AQ4) is derived from the works of Araghi (2009) who holds a world-historical view of the agrarian question. He argues that neoliberal globalization is not a unique period in history; on the contrary, it is the continuation of the same pattern that existed since 19th-century liberal imperialism (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010b: 267). Referring to the law of value, Araghi (2009) argues that labor is consciously devalued, and so are the peasants, whereas capital is held superior in terms of its role in global capitalism. Landless peasants who are left with nothing besides their labor constitute a global reserve army of laborers. As a result, AQ4 is concerned with the reproduction of agrarian labor by the conditions of neoliberal globalism.

The corporate food regime (AQ5) is the fifth variant of the contemporary agrarian question, based on the works of McMichael (2006, 2009b, 2013), and the food regime theory that he developed together with Friedmann (1989). This variant addresses the agrarian question as ‘the agrarian question of food’ “conditioned by the political history of capitalism” (McMichael, 2009b: 289) rather than the history of capitalist transition. According to him, the classical agrarian question treated ‘food’ as a commodity to be exchanged, devoid of any reference to its role in human survival, social reproduction, and the international system. He also adds that the classical agrarian question excluded peasants from the accumulation process and did not recognize their agency. By adopting world-historical lenses, McMichael (2009b) argues for the politicization of food and peasant-capital relations. In its broadest sense, it is the corporate food regime

that governs the agrifood system, displaces peoples of the South from their land, and sacrifices them for the functioning of the international market and trade. In this sense, the fifth variant of the agrarian question is focused on rural livelihoods within the global structure where they are governed by the rules of the market, vulnerable to price changes, and systematically excluded from production. The corporate food regime is also characterized by heavy usage of fossil fuels, genetically modified (GM) seeds, and subsidies provided by the Global North to its farmers in order to give them a head start in global competition rendering the unsupported, indebted farmers of the Global South pauperized.

The last two variants of the agrarian question, according to Akram-Lodhi and Kay (2010b: 268), are the direct result of what they think has been “missing” from the agrarian question compared to the previous five variants. The sixth one, the gendered agrarian question (AQ6), is solely focused on the gendered dynamics of rural change. Women, in particular, are the ones who work more on the land but are also the ones who have to bear the consequences of being dispossessed. Without any framework on gendered rural production, accumulation, and politics; the agrarian question remains inadequate in explaining the conditions of the peasants.

The last and seventh variant, the ecological agrarian question (AQ7) on the other hand, illuminates the ecological dimension of capitalist production, and its unprecedented search for growth-based extraction and exploitation. Interestingly, capitalism’s engagement in nature has been very contradictory; nature has been systematically robbed by capitalism of its resources and well-being throughout the processes of capitalist production and accumulation. Although the cost of appropriating nature seems minimal for the capitalist, mindless exploitation of nature could be the very reason for the possible fall of capitalism, if not humanity. In this sense, capitalism’s contradictory relationship with nature not only shapes the current state of rural production, accumulation, and politics but also opens up a fundamental discussion around alternatives of future transition to a just and ecological system and what it would potentially look like (Akram-Lodhi & Kay, 2010a).

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to provide a general look at the agrarian question and its accompanying concepts to bring light to the contemporary issues on food and agriculture as well as key historical turning points such as the capitalist transition. Although the agrarian question emerged from questions regarding agriculture's partial surrender to the capitalist transition, contemporary developments demanded revisions to be made both in its content and future concerns. The new variants of the agrarian question are molded into different forms in order to respond to the needs of today by scholars of critical agrarian studies. The 'new' agrarian question, now, corresponds to the issues arising together with neoliberal globalization and the corporate food regime. Ecology, gender, race, and many more areas of concern have been integrated into the analyses to make sense of the key points of the current crises of food, environment, and more.

This thesis argues that the agrarian question has not lost its relevance; the complexity of emerging global trends requires revisiting the initial agrarian question even more than ever. This chapter also set the scene for the rest of the thesis in terms of the framing of the agrarian question. For the remainder of the thesis, the main framework of the agrarian question used and utilized will be AQ5, *the agrarian question of food and of corporate food regime*, and AQ7, *the ecological agrarian question*. The thesis aims to locate its arguments within the broader world-historical context and neoliberal globalization. Utilizing AQ5 and AQ7 will be an appropriate way to examine food production, agriculture, ecology, and the conditions of the peasantry through global trends of neoliberal fetish of accumulation and growth, highly polarized global politics of food, dispossession on a world scale, environmental degradation, and social movements.

CHAPTER 2

ALTERNATIVE RESPONSES TO THE CURRENT “FOOD CRISIS”

The first chapter justified that the fifth and seventh variant of the agrarian question within the critical agrarian studies, *the agrarian question of food*, and *the ecological agrarian question* will be the main framework onwards. Critical scholars of this line of thought have engaged in generating multiple responses to solve the food crisis which show itself as increasing hunger, food prices, mass food production and ecological breakdown, through the agrarian question of food and ecology by emphasizing different methods and actors. However, the mainstream thought mostly shaped and directed by international (financial) institutions, states, and the private sector intertwined with the neoliberal development agenda, has been the default in governing the international system of food and agriculture. Not surprisingly, mainstream responses to the food crisis have been more visible in navigating contemporary crises as well. This chapter's objective is to bring mainstream thought into the picture and comparatively assess its responses vis-a-vis critical responses. These include policies, political decisions, technological advancements, social movements, revolutions, reforms, and many more steps to resolve the food crisis and the agrarian question in the Global South.

It must be noted that the agrarian question entails the politicization of food as a commodity, questioning the role of the peasantry, their agency, and political mobilization in neoliberal capital accumulation while also revisiting the ecological

breakdown from the political history of capitalism through a world-historical lens. It also concerns poverty, uneven development, the North/South divide, and neo-colonial patterns that sustain it. For what critical refers to as the agrarian question, the mainstream reframes it, reducing it to only a 'food crisis.' Then, the responses by mainstream and critical within the context of the agrarian question and food crisis concern how they frame the issue, where they see possible solutions lie, and what elements should be prioritized. In a brief sense, mainstream responses to agrarian question are adopted by the active members of the neoliberal corporate food regime and are in favor of reforming the existing system to tackle the problems at hand. Thus, reforms will mostly be organic; as humans progress, necessary advancements and improvements in lacking political, social, economic, and technological spheres will follow by creating more effective and productive alternatives to old-fashioned techniques.

On the other hand, critical responses for the agrarian question consider the existing capitalist system under neoliberal globalization to be the sole cause of the crises, poverty, inequality, and many more problems existing today, and it is only logical to take radical action to change it. However, what they strive for is systemic change accompanied by mentality change in terms of how we think about production through assessing who produces what, where, and how. These critical responses are actively supported by transnational social movements, non-governmental organizations, activists, and critical scholars.

This chapter consists of three sections allocated to the analysis and assessment of mainstream responses, critical responses and their critical assessment. Both responses will be examined through the context in which they came to be, how they have been framed, and what actors are dominant in their emergence and reproduction.

2.1. Mainstream Responses

This section will examine responses against the current crisis of food and poverty which are advocated (and implemented) by the actors of the corporate food regime, namely, international finance and development institutions, large agribusinesses, the countries of

the Global North, and philanthropist foundations. The mainstream line of thinking engages with the agrarian question of neither capital nor labor based on their argument that intensified capitalist production, globalization, interdependency, and especially the free flow of capital has rendered the agrarian question of capital/labor irrelevant. Actors of corporate food regime only recognize some parts of the agrarian question of food, referring to the complex network of disruptions to the agrifood system (increasing food prices, food shortages, wars, COVID-19, etc.), prevalent hunger and malnutrition in the Global South, poverty and increasing ecological fragility. This perception also encourages food security to be adopted as the leading discourse of the elimination of hunger and malnutrition in addition to poverty eradication.

In this section, mainstream responses are identified as i) strengthening private investment in agriculture, ii) improving technology in agricultural production, iii) increasing access to the global market, and iv) adopting greener agricultural practices. Taken together, these responses constitute a broader program, which has been termed as the ‘New Green Revolution.’

This section will begin with a broad overview of the Green Revolution, the predecessor of the New Green Revolution, which was highly influential throughout the era of developmentalism between the 1940s-1970s and recognized as the key event of “[t]he construction of the corporate food regime” (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 98). Later, the ‘food security’ framework as an overarching policy goal of the corporate food regime through how and why it came to be the dominant framework adopted by the mainstream for eliminating world hunger will be examined. Lastly, the New Green Revolution will be identified as the overarching mainstream responses to the food crisis and it will be examined through its constitutive sub-responses identified above.

2.1.1. The Green Revolution

During the era of developmentalism from the 1940s to 1970s, the Green Revolution emerged as a privately funded US-led response to the food crisis in the Global South, which was experiencing population growth but low rates of agricultural production to keep up with it. The Green Revolution was also an instrument of broader development

vision that aimed to help the Global South to “catch up with the developed countries in the North ” (Kumbamu, 2020: 1367) and planted the seeds of the corporate food regime. The action plan adopted within the framework of the Green Revolution was to increase per capita food production in the Global South through the adoption of plant-breeding agricultural technologies that produced high-yielding seeds (McMichael, 1996), mostly in wheat and rice which came in the form of international agricultural development assistance. This assistance included “breeding programmes for staple cereals, the organization and distribution of packages of high payoff inputs, such as fertilizers, pesticides, and water regulation; and implementation of these technical innovations in the best-favoured agroclimatic regions and for those classes of farmers with the best expectations of realizing the potential yields” (Conway & Barbier, 1988: 652), but was devoid of any regard to rural livelihoods or social justice.

Then-administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development William Gaud was the one who coined the term ‘Green Revolution’ (Patel, 2013) and he was a strong advocate for technology transfers to the Global South. However, the main actor who partook in the role of providing tools to the Green Revolution was big philanthropy; the Rockefeller Foundation and Ford Foundation who funded scientific research and the development of productive inputs for agriculture. Even so, in the speech given by William Gaud, he pointed to the Rockefeller Foundation’s research in Mexico on wheat and its 1962 collaboration with Ford Foundation to establish the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines as the very first events of the Green Revolution (Gaud, 1968; Patel, 2013).

In terms of how governmental policies were carried out for the realization of the Green Revolution, the U.S.-led developmentalist regime “pressed” the Global South “to invest more in agriculture, to introduce price incentives and other measures that favor and stimulate food production, to shift fertilizer manufacture and distribution from public channels to more efficient private outlets, and to liberalize import quotas on raw materials for fertilizer production” (Gaud, 1968). As a result, the Green Revolution managed to generate remarkable success in increasing agricultural production, especially in Asia and Latin America (McMichael, 1996) which also got ahead of the population

growth (Patel, 2013). Yet, many conclude that the Green Revolution was only successful in producing more food; it failed to feed the world (McMichael, 1996; Patel, 2013; Vanhaute 2011). Thus, it has been argued that the Green Revolution was not intended to feed the world, it was “about national security and stability” (Patel, Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2009: 19), a conscious Cold War strategy to prevent food crisis in the Global South from triggering communist uprisings (Clapp, 2012: 34), especially against the Maoist resurgence in Asia (Ajl, 2020: 50). As is evident in the words of William Gaud:

“These and other developments in the field of agriculture contain the makings of a new revolution. It is not a violent Red Revolution like that of the Soviets, nor is it a White Revolution like that of the Shah of Iran. I call it the Green Revolution.” (Gaud, 1968)

Problems resulting from the Green Revolution were multidimensional and they played a prominent role in determining the structuring of the current global food system. First, monoculture farming of wheat and rice forced out other crops of the market, resulting in less diversity and more nutrition deficiency in rural diets (Ajl, 2020). In addition, although new seeds were indeed more productive, their performance depended on heavy usage of agrochemicals such as pesticides and fertilizers making agricultural production more input dependent than ever (McMichael, 1996: 69). The Green Revolution also resulted in increasing numbers of indebted and dispossessed farmers who could not afford the regular purchase and use of external inputs (hybrid seeds, fertilizer, pesticide) while farmers who could afford it benefitted from high-yielding inputs and experienced a rapid increase in their income levels which in turn further fragmented the peasantry. The policy framework of the revolution created an enabling political and economic environment in the Global South for capital to expand and concentrate (Feder, 1976). Lastly, intensified agricultural production undermined farm work and human labor which drove unemployment in rural communities (McMichael, 1996).

2.1.2. Food Security

Looking at the brief history and development of food security, the first World Food Conference held in Rome, in 1974, which also adopted ‘Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition’, defined it as “the availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic food-stuffs” (UN, 1975: 3) delivered “through measures including inter alia a better early warning and food information system, more effective national and international stock-holding policies and improved arrangements for emergency relief and food aid” (1975: 29). Later in 1996, World Food Summit on Food Security adopted a renewed definition, that “food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (FAO, 1996). With the adoption of ‘Declaration of the World Food Summit: five years later’ in 2002, the global audience was reassured that “poverty reduction and food security strategies should, inter alia, include measures to increase agricultural productivity, food production and distribution” (FAO, 2002). Next, the World Food Summit held in 2009 continued to adopt the 1996 definition of food security but added special emphasis to the four dimensions of food security: availability, access, utilization, and stability while also acknowledging the vitality of ensuring nutritional dimension (FAO, 2009: 1). According to Patel, definitions of food security have evolved “from being simply about producing and distributing food, to a whole nexus of concerns around nutrition, social control, and public health” (2009: 664). It was also, he argues, the constant pressure from critical voices that led FAO to broaden the food security framework despite the lack of debate on “the social control of the food system” (Patel, 2009: 665).

Food security is composed of four key dimensions. First, *availability* is directed at the existence of enough food supply that can meet the needs of the people on global, regional, national, household, and individual levels and it is also the main pillar on which the first definition of food security was built. Food availability is directly concerned with increasing agricultural productivity, promoting exports, and providing food aids to increase the quantity of food where food scarcity is experienced. Second, *access* refers to the structuring of strong multilevel networks, e.g., trade, among actors to

ensure nutritious food is accessible to everyone everywhere. The third dimension, *utilization*, is comprised of all the processes in which people can make use of the food “through adequate diet, clean water, sanitation, and health care to reach a state of nutritional wellbeing where all physiological needs are met” (FAO, 2003) which also enhances the food security discourse in a way that it encompasses non-food inputs and nutritional value of food. Lastly, *stability* applies to the availability of a constant supply of food at all times without being affected by disruptions to the food system, e.g., price shocks, pandemics, and natural disasters, which is also the dimension that availability and accessibility dimensions merge.

The most recent report by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO titled ‘The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2022’ takes a broader approach to food insecurity by focusing more on transforming the food system rather than solely increasing agricultural productivity. In the same report, measures to transform the food system to ensure food security are identified as increasing institutional (both national and global) capabilities, supporting technological innovations, climate resilient techniques, and increasing access to global markets. According to McMichael, while food security aims to “provide populations with sufficient and predictable food supplies” (1996: 165) it does through intensive large-scale industrial production (Wittman, 2011: 91). Thus, the adoption of the food security framework at the international level by the neoliberal institutions and states has put the eradication of hunger and poverty through reforming the agrifood system at the center of the neoliberal development agenda and economic growth (Claeys, Desmarais & Singh, 2021). Market and technology-oriented solutions for food insecurity have granted the private sector the role of provider of such technologies whereas states and development/financial institutions have taken the role of enabler, regulator, and driver of the agrifood system under the corporate food regime.

2.1.3. The New Green Revolution

Starting with the 1980s, the rise and hegemony of neoliberalist policies and increasing financialization of the agrifood system further intensified the pressure on the Global South. Similarly, aggressive levels of mass industrial agricultural production resulted in profound environmental harm. For the political climate, the dissolution of the Soviet

Union relieved the U.S. in terms of a possible communist threat to the South. The original Green Revolution succeeded in terms of producing more food, but its unaccounted results did not go unnoticed by the actors of the corporate food regime as they did not by the people of the Global South. Given that the dynamics of neoliberal globalization changed the international scene, there appeared new concerns over food supply “for an anticipated 9 billion people by 2050” (Taylor, 2018: 89) besides the concerns over the continuation of capital accumulation. Additionally, climate change increasingly manifests itself especially in the vulnerable communities of the Global South with droughts, extreme weather, wildfires, loss of biodiversity, and many more externalities that directly affect agriculture. There was also a consensus over the fact that the original Green Revolution did not yield the desired results for small farmers (Patel, 2013). As apparent in Bill Gates’ words; “the next Green Revolution has to be greener than the first. It must be guided by small-holder farmers, adapted to local circumstances, and sustainable for the economy and the environment” (Gates, 2009). In 2006, Gates Foundation partnered with the Rockefeller Foundation to establish the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) to channel private and governmental efforts to improve the conditions of African small farmers (Patel, 2013) which is recognized as the start of a new era, the New Green Revolution.

As noted, a renewed and reformed approach to agriculture proved to be essential in ensuring food security. In this sense, the New Green Revolution builds on the original Green Revolution in principle but “has added transgenic technologies, global markets, environmental concerns and a leading role for the private sector” (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 92) to its agenda. The new agenda is built on small farmers’ access to the global market, an increasing role for private investment, a complete shift to technology-based practices, and environmentally friendly agricultural production. Thus, out of all the issues concerning the new agenda, it can be argued that the environment is prioritized more by the policy circles, particularly because of intense and persisting societal pressure for the climate crisis.

The renewed program has also experienced a radical change in its leading actors except for states who have preserved its importance in supporting the policy dimension of the

new revolution. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation replaced the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations in investment and agricultural research and development. Additionally, the New Green Revolution has enhanced the role of the private sector even more (Patel, 2013) through efforts of philanthropic organizations to establish strong links between the two actors. In 2010, Gates Foundation invested \$23 Million in Monsanto, an agrochemical and biotechnology company until it was sold to Bayer in 2018, while also collaborating with Cargill, an agribusiness giant, in numerous rural development projects to end world hunger (Vidal, 2010). Not only have states and philanthropy expressed interest in ending world hunger, but also Holt-Giménez and Altieri (2013: 92) argue that the other “food regime institutions have steadily converged around the new Green Revolution agenda.” World Bank with its key document *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development*, adopted this framework fairly fast and referred to the New Green Revolution as “emerging new agriculture” which “is led by private entrepreneurs in extensive value chains linking producers to consumers and including many entrepreneurial smallholders supported by their organizations (World Bank, 2007: 8). This take on ‘emerging new agriculture’ positioned agriculture at the heart of the development agenda for the World Bank and other institutions alike (McMichael, 2009c). Through these constructions of links and alliances, the New Green Revolution engineered a much stronger network among its actors.

It must be noted that the aforementioned changes and reforms should not be read as a sign of refusal of the core principles of the original revolution. Patel (2013: 18) strongly argues that widely shared support and trust in the New Green Revolution “rests on the foundation that ‘the original Green Revolution was successful.’” Holt-Giménez and Altieri (2013: 90) explain this phenomenon through the supposition shared by the actors of the corporate food regime such that the food crisis was not the result of “Green Revolution agriculture and liberalized global market,” but the result of “inefficient or inadequate application” of both that has led to food crisis. Thus, the realization and success of the New Green Revolution, which is referred to here as the overarching mainstream response, is contingent on i) strengthening private investment in agriculture, ii) improving technology in agricultural production, iii) increasing access to the global market) and iv) adopting greener agricultural practices.

i) Strengthening private investment in agriculture

According to the neoliberal corporate food regime, productivity has been the major problem for agricultural production in the Global South. The way in which hunger, malnutrition, and poverty have become so prevalent in the South has direct links to their inefficient traditional agricultural practices which yield less and are unable to meet the demand of the growing population which will only intensify with the climate crisis in the near future. Bill Gates (2009) argues that “helping the poorest small-holder farmers grow more crops and get them to market is the world's single most powerful lever for reducing hunger and poverty.” Promoting investment in the agricultural sector is the first key concern offered as a way to increase productivity. By investment, the neoliberal corporate food regime advocates for the South to welcome capital, mostly foreign, in order to improve infrastructure, build productive agricultural systems, help rural development by funding social projects and provide farmers with the needed new technology and know-how with science-based solutions. The actors of this process are, with the intense promotion of capital expansion through privatization, international financial and development institutions (WTO, IMF, and World Bank); enabler/welcoming governments of the South who either cannot exercise their sovereignty within the neoliberal regime or are in alliance with domestic/foreign capital; philanthropies which allocate extensive budget for research and land purchase; major agribusinesses who have the power of lobbying and shaping development agenda; and lastly states of the Global North who have the ability to influence global policy frameworks and discourses.

ii) Improving technology in agricultural production

Within the neoliberal wisdom, “there is a technological fix for each and every problem” (Harvey, 2005: 68) and it is no surprise that the mainstream way of fixing the food crisis is highly dependent on technology and innovation for increasing productivity. Looking deeper as to why biotechnology is seen as promising is because the internal logic of corporate /philanthropy-led development is rooted in the belief that business methods can be replicated to solve social problems (Holt-Giménez & Shattuck, 2011: 119). Adoption of biotechnology in agriculture refers to science-based solutions for the

“genetic improvement of plants and animals to increase their yields or efficiency” (FAO, 2011) in addition to “alleviating poverty and improving rural development” (Schnurr & Addison, 2021: 427) which is designed to help small scale peasants farmers who work the land through traditional techniques by providing them with genetically modified crops and seeds that are more resilient to external damages and capable of enhancing more yields.

Biotechnology is also subject to legal support through intellectual property laws. As part of the Uruguay Round, 1994 The Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreements granted protection to biotech plants and seeds from being replicated and sold, as a result of transnational corporations’ pressure (Clapp, 2012: 74). The debate then shifted to questioning the ethical dimension of profiting from life forms and the possible future risk that transnational corporations might patent already existing plants without recognizing years of peasant contributions (Clapp, 2012: 74).

Four major agribusinesses, what McKay and Veltmeyer (2021: 507) refer to as the ‘Big Four’ of market oligopoly, namely, BASF, Monsanto-Bayer, ChemChina (Syngenta), and DowDuPont, are in control of “75 percent of the global agrochemical market, 63 percent of the commercial seed market and over 75 percent of private-sector research in seeds and pesticides,” (McKay & Veltmeyer, 2021: 507). Philanthropist foundations also take an active role in the functioning of the agrifood system through funding biotechnological research for agrichemicals, fertilizers, GMOs, and thus seed commercialization. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has also been investing in corporations like Monsanto and Cargill (OCA, 2020; Vidal, 2010).

iii) Increasing access to the global market

The third guiding principle of the New Green Revolution is to ensure farmers’ access to the global market through agriculture value chains. Compared to investment and technology which both converge on the concerns over increasing agricultural productivity; increasing access to the global market signifies a different goal; to create an enabling environment for more exchange to accelerate the economic well-being of the farmers of the South. Small farmers of the Global South, despite previous efforts to

integrate them into the global agrifood system, still “remain on the margins of global trade, attract limited foreign or domestic investment, and are locked into supplying a narrow range of goods or services” (WTO, 2013). As reformist as the New Green Revolution is, it is still very much committed to the functioning of the global market and competition as the core principles of neoliberalism. Similarly, although promoting on-farm productivity is central to increasing food supply, the mainstream thinking also finds improving conditions of which small farmers connect to the global market extremely important not only for food supply but also for increasing their income levels because small farmers usually sell their goods on the domestic market, which makes their income unstable and low, forcing them to work off-farm jobs (McMichael, 2013: 671). Bill Gates (2009) explains this as to why market accessibility is crucial in improving food security and poverty:

“During the mid-1990s in Ethiopia, the push to increase productivity led to bumper cereal crops in the highlands, but farmers couldn’t get their crops to distant markets. So local markets had too much food, prices crashed, and farmers suffered – while distant markets had too little food, prices stayed high, and poor people went hungry.”

In market access, food value chains and their improvement is seen as a necessary component of the New Green Revolution but “remote location, high transportation costs, limited knowledge, and the lack of business skills and an organization that could give them the bargaining power they require to interact on equal terms with other market intermediaries” (IFAD: n.d.) in addition to overall “access to finance” (WTO, 2013: 9) are recognized as impediments for farmers of the Global South to access distant markets. Therefore, in order to increase market accessibility, development institutions promote, and fund means of establishing strong networks between transnational corporations and small farmers through credit, subsidies, infrastructure building, food processing, marketing, and many more improvements on agriculture value chains. Bill Gates (2009) even goes on to advise food companies to buy from small farmers and “turning them as suppliers.”

The preferred way in which smallholders participate more in the global market is through their agricultural goods produced on the basis of comparative advantage with monoculture agriculture. In this sense, “efforts to connect smallholders in developing countries to corporate-controlled global supply chains” (Clapp & Moseley, 2020: 1396) aims to “convert smallholders (...) into means (rather than barriers) for the expansion of industrial agriculture” (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 97).

iv) Adopting greener agricultural practices

According to the World Bank (2016), “‘Green’ refers to a world in which natural resources, including oceans, land, and forests, are sustainably managed and conserved to improve livelihoods and ensure food security.” In terms of agriculture, the environment is of crucial importance not only for ensuring nutritious, healthy, sustainable, and diverse diets to people but also because their existence depends on each other. This co-dependent relationship between agriculture and the environment is also evident such that “[a]griculture is a significant contributor to climate change as well as one of the economic sectors most at risk from it” (Tubiello et al., 2022: 1795). Agriculture as a sector is found to be responsible for nearly 20% of all greenhouse gas emissions, yet in a broader context, the agrifood system as a whole, including “food processing, packaging, transport, household consumption, and waste disposal” (UN News, 2021) is a major carbon contributor by 29-30% (Vermeulen, Campbell & Ingram, 2012; Tubiello et al., 2022).

Large-scale industrial agriculture’s impact on the environment is driven by extensive use of fossil fuels, external inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) that exhaust the quality of soil, unsustainable practices in agricultural production, and deforestation for land use. As a result, the environment is “suffering the consequences of decades of unsustainable and intensive farming” (CEEweb, 2017) such as “pollution, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, carbon footprint, soil degradation, and natural resource depletion” (Hall & Dorai, 2012: 18). Although critical voices have always been drawing attention to the vitality of addressing ecology within the framework of industrial production for decades, recent years have seen a remarkable increase in ‘green’ discourses among states, international institutions, and corporations which coincides with the era of heightened climate

emergency. In this regard, what greening the agricultural practices entail for the mainstream circles are; crop diversification, genetically engineered resilient crops, adopting climate-smart agriculture (CSA), and nature-based practices in order to improve food security, enhance biodiversity and the quality of soil, resource management, and sustainable land use. However, it is possible to divide efforts to have greener agriculture into two broad measures: climate-smart agriculture and nature-based solutions.

FAO (n.d.) defines climate-smart agriculture (CSA) as “an approach that helps guide actions to transform agrifood systems towards green and climate-resilient practices.” World Bank (2021: 25), on the other hand, emphasizes its “triple-win benefits: enhancing productivity, reducing GHG emissions, and improving resilience” which are also recognized as climate efforts for intensification, adoption, and mitigation (Taylor, 2018: 2). CSA is not a clearly defined set of rules or policy proposals; however, the defining feature of the CSA is that they are locally adopted and nationally/internationally supported technology and market-oriented fixes to global food and climate crises. Weather, soil quality, societal needs, resources, and many more variables play a huge role in deciding the most effective and appropriate CSA practice within a locality. To exemplify, while CSA in Sri Lanka focuses more on the technical dimension by training the farmers on climate-resilient crop production and supplying them with necessary modern inputs (FAO, 2021: 12), CSA in Mongolia involves enhancing institutional capacity by linking the Mongolian government with the private sector to deliver better climate measures and support to its farmers (FAO, 2021: 40).

The second greening measure is nature-based solutions which are dominated by agroecology, defined as “a holistic and integrated approach that simultaneously applies ecological and social concepts and principles to the design and management of sustainable agriculture and food systems” (FAO: n.d.). This mainstream response to the food crisis, embracing agroecology as a framework, is aimed at reversing the current ecological damage, increasing resilience, sustainability while also alleviating the conditions of the small farmers in the Global South through adopting agricultural practices that are closely linked to nature’s way of producing agricultural products and

creating a harmonious ecosystem. One of the most repetitive arguments by FAO (2018) is the necessity of increasing yields and recovering the soil that has been damaged from excess monoculture and harmful agricultural practices through technology-based solutions and their incorporation into agroecology and its general framework. For that, UN has put special emphasis on creating a common platform where international actors, ranging from states to private sector, to come together to show collective effort towards making agriculture less resource dependent and harmful for the ecosystem. It is also possible to say that mainstream take on agroecology is also very much in line with CSA and wants to connect technological innovation with nature and benefit from this relationship.

2.2. Assessment of the Mainstream Responses

Not surprisingly, mainstream responses have attracted various criticisms. This section will be allocated to the most repeated criticisms regarding the four responses identified above.

On (i) strengthening private investment in agriculture, scholars of critical agrarian studies repeatedly emphasize that investment often manifests itself as land grabs, new enclosures, and dispossessed farmers. In simplest terms, land grabbing is the appropriation of land, mostly in the Global South, by corporations and states to produce food and agrofuels. McMichael claims that land grab is nothing “other than simply a contemporary enclosure of land for capitalist expansion” (2012: 682). What critical voices argue for is that the act of promoting investment in agriculture for productive and modern production to eliminate hunger, malnutrition, and poverty must be analyzed beyond development and food crisis discourse. Corporations, states, philanthropies, and institutions of the North are in need of new enclosures because they have been long aware of ‘the accumulation crisis’ of capitalism (McMichael, 2012) which has made itself visible through rising food prices, increasing demand for agrofuels, and more than likely intensification of global crisis because of heightened climate change. Beyond the accumulation crisis, another motive for land grabs, critical scholars argue, is capitalism's inherent need to seek exponential growth through capital expansion which makes cheap land in the South very attractive to foreign investors. Yet, cheap land is not cheap as it

costs dispossession of the peasantry from their land and environmental harm which not only have financial significance but also cultural importance.

Secondly, on (ii) improving technology in agricultural production, the common critique is that agricultural biotechnology has become the “tool of the neoliberal food regime that serves to restructure agrarian relations to the detriment of the rural poor” (Schnurr & Addison, 2021: 428). One must note that technology is the “infusion of knowledge into material goods (...) which have prices, which are the effects of global power relationships” (Ajl, 2020: 55) and it is not neutral. What technology and innovation entail for the farmers of the Global South is increasing infiltration of agribusinesses and philanthropies into the rural social relations, dependency on inputs, especially to commercial seeds and genetically modified crops, and foreign concentration of capital. As Patel et al. (2013: 4) simply put it, “seeds, like little tiny beads of software, can be programmed to transmit that knowledge for commercial purposes.”

Akram-Lodhi (2021: 697) criticizes the unnecessary hope tied to technological innovation to solve declining rates of agricultural production, issue of resilience, and environmental harm by indicating that capital’s tendency is to centralize into oligopolies, rather than enabling competitive innovation. One way of explaining this trust and optimism that has been shown towards agricultural biotechnology uncovers the ways in which the North has constructed and utilized ‘science’ as an undisputable instrument of modernity to solve the problems of the ‘backward’. Schnurr and Addison (2021: 428) demonstrate this argument through the necessary creation of “institutions, norms, and narratives that facilitate social approval of biotechnology” by corporations, policymakers, and scientists.

The third point of criticism comes from the (iii) increasing access to the global market. The WTO refers to value chains as a “path towards development” (2013: 6) for providing opportunities for triggering economic growth, whereas McMichael (2013: 671) see them “as technologies of economic and ecological power.” These different framings of value chains stem from power imbalance within the system by the dominant actors who are able to shape and shift the governance of the system, which are corporations and development/financial institutions for the agriculture value chain.

McMichael (2013: 687) continues his argument by indicating that the New Green Revolution is “drawing producers into competitive markets over which they have no control.”

Lastly, on the issue of (iv) adopting greener agricultural practices, the criticisms target both climate-smart agriculture and agroecology. Clapp, Newell & Brent (2018) find three issues of the adoption of CSA that have been disregarded by those who promote it; existing power relations shaping the agrifood system, continuity, and change in promoting open market and technology, and little to no regard for inequality. The first issue is evident in terms of who holds power to shape the agrifood system and the ways in which they are being enforced onto others. It is clear that the CSA framework is promoted for the vulnerable agriculture of the Global South to combat food security and rural poverty by paying attention to climate adoption and mitigation, however, the Southern states, local communities, small farmers, and agricultural workers are often absent from the policy-making whose livelihoods are at stake with the intense infiltration of the set of rules, norms, and policies designed by the Global North. This, in turn, reproduces the power imbalance within the agrifood system in which advocates of CSA fail to acknowledge. The second issue, according to Clapp et al. (2018: 83) is that the corporate food regime is “reinforcing existing approaches” to agriculture, since the original Green Revolution, based on technology and market, still functions as the same but has been thus “relabelled” as ‘climate smart’ (2018: 84) which they argue, becomes the “new sites for capital accumulation” (2018: 84). Lastly, CSA does not address either existing or future inequalities within rural communities. Scherr, Shames and Friedman (2012) argue that CSA is a farm-based approach that does not try to go beyond the borders of the farmland in its application. Without addressing existing gendered, racial, and class-based inequalities of the peasantry of the Global South, intensified technology adoption and further subjection to market will have a further polarizing effect and differentiation between the small farmers. Clapp et al. (2018) also add to this by indicating that the triple wins of the CSA are only wins for the active actors of global governance of the agrifood system.

Secondly, following the persistent efforts from social movements, scholars, and NGOs for agroecology, actors of corporate food regime have been pressured into adopting agroecological practices; however, their adoption has been selective and limited to only its “technical aspects” without “challenge[ing] the politics of the Green Revolution” (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 93), making agroecology under corporate food regime “de-politicized and project-based” (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 97). What critical scholars argue that agroecology is an umbrella approach that encompasses intense indigenous knowledge not only on agriculture but also on the harmonious relationship between humans and nature in order to restructure a sustainable, low input, low waste, diverse and green system. Agroecology is also characterized by its historical importance of feeding local communities for hundreds of years without any dependence on human-made inputs, large-scale mechanization, and technology, thus serving as a counter-practice to large-scale industrial agriculture. In this sense, the way in which the new Green Revolution has adopted agroecology seems rather limited and technical. As Holt-Giménez and Altieri (2013: 94) argue, agroecology has become a popular topic for “academic projects that erase its history, stripping it of its political content” within the corporate food regime and it is being treated as a mere agricultural technique for crop production and nothing more.

The broader food security framework offered by the mainstream circles has also attracted legitimate concerns about its purpose, scope, and ability to grasp the roots of the current problems residing within the agrifood system in relation to global capitalism and neoliberal globalization. Its emphasis on the existence of food without any regard to how and where it is coming from is a problematic framing of the issue that is also paving the way for the continuity of the dependent relationship between the Global South and the Global North fueled by increasing agrifood trade, food aids and injection of foreign products into local markets of the Global South undermining their sovereignty and independence. Food security framework has been identified as failing to address the main challenges posed by the neoliberal policies implemented in agriculture without acknowledging the existing power structure within the agrifood system. Evidentially, food security and its emphasis on accessibility and availability (Akram-Lodhi, 2021) led to its intentional convergence with the neoliberal structuring of the international trade

that takes food exports to food-insecure states as the desired resolution to food insecurity. In actuality, the functioning of the neoliberal trade regime is based on the global flow of goods, food in this case, to places it is needed, which are the food insecure states. According to Amin (2017), this must come as no surprise; Global North is well aware of the importance of being able to decide how and where the food should grow and come from and takes action accordingly by subsidizing its farmers, being protective of its domestic agricultural sector with tariffs and quotas; however, they are promoting food security for the Global South and suggesting that they should fully surrender to the rules of the global market. Then this begs the question; can the system manage to solve a problem it has created?

Mainstream vision, in a way, is reformist. By incorporating "green, clean, resilient" strategies (World Bank, 2016) into the neoliberal agenda, it seeks to reform the existing system, rather than to change it. This reformist shift is also evident in 'green capitalism' and 'green growth' discourses, which will be covered in the coming chapters because it is built on the assumption that capitalism and growth can well adapt to the needs of the era with minor revisions. In this sense, mainstream vision promotes a neoliberal-environmentalist action plan to restructure a "food system that can feed every person, every day, everywhere; that can raise real incomes of the poorest people; that can provide safe food and adequate nutrition; and that can better steward the world's natural resources" (Townsend, 2015: 3).

2.3. Critical Responses

In this section, three major responses from the critical voices as possible resolutions to the food crises via agrarian question of the 21st century will be identified: food sovereignty, agroecology, and delinking. However, it is crucial to note that they are by no means separate from each other; they have been intimately linked and constitute a complex network of rural voices for the agrarian crisis. This section argues that the three responses share three common elements that are necessary for the realization and smooth functioning of each: i) collective resistance ii) land reform and iii) democratization and political action. Not only do critical voices consider the agrarian question to be alive and extremely relevant, but they also have extended it beyond its

initial problematic of accumulation-ownership relation by incorporating peasantry, ecology, food politics, and North/South divide into their analysis through examining ways and conditions of which capitalism has impacted and politicized numerous realms compared to classical agrarian question's previous concerns.

2.3.1. Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty has become one of the most significant paths to build alternatives to replace the existing global capitalist food production and the corporate food regime by reclaiming the right to food as a basic human right (La Via Campesina, 1996). In its broadest sense, food sovereignty entails the right of the people to grow, produce and access the foods that are nutritious, culturally significant, and ecologically sustainable. Food sovereignty was defined at the 2007 Forum for Food Sovereignty in Nyéléni, Mali as:

“[t]he right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations” (La Via Campesina, 2008)

The movement was initially born out of the collective struggles experienced by the peasants, indigenous people, and farmers from all around the world against multilateral institutions, agribusinesses, and states who have exerted power over the agrifood system and left people, especially of the Global South, displaced, dispossessed, indebted and pauperized (Holt-Giménez, Shattuck & Van Lammeren, 2021: 718). However, it also emerged as a response to the food security framework which has been proposed and promoted by multilateral institutions. What the proponents of food sovereignty have identified as lacking from the food security framework is the lack of mentioning of the perpetuation of power structures by actors who have established dominance and control over the agrifood system and what it implies for policy-making on national and global levels in addition to the wellbeing of nature during the processes of food production and

distribution. This is why food sovereignty is a revolutionary idea whereas food security sees no issue in sustaining the existing system but making several changes here and there to feed the hungry. FAO's and other organizations' special effort to promote food security over food sovereignty must be also read as being complementary to the functioning of the rest of the global system as also Clapp (2012: 174) sees food sovereignty "as an alternative, not a supplement, to the global system" contrary to food security. However, it must also be noted that they are not, by definition, rival frameworks. Food security lacks necessary questioning of the roots of the problem and must come after needed debates on self-sufficiency in food production. Thus, food sovereignty is widely recognized as the "precondition for food security" (Patel, 2009: 669).

Another unique dimension of food sovereignty is its high relevance to the national liberation and rural development agenda concerning the periphery. To Amin (2017: 158) "without food sovereignty, no political sovereignty is possible." How this argument came to be is a direct reflection of the way in which food security has been framed by the core and its institutions. As uncovered by the USDA (1989 as cited in Ritchie, 1993), "[t]he U.S. has always maintained that self-sufficiency and food security are not one and the same. Food security — the ability to acquire the food you need when you need it — is best provided through a smooth-functioning world market." Suffice it to say that this neoliberal framing of food security has been maintained on the condition that the food insecure periphery should depend on foreign agro exports for their food deficit and opt for specialization in agricultural production (Amin, 2017) and privatization in order to improve the state of their agrifood system. Then, the desired path for the Global South to dismantle this dependent economy and achieve rural self-reliance together with national sovereignty is through food sovereignty.

La Via Campesina brought food sovereignty to the global agenda in 1996 at the United Nations Food Summit in Rome where they laid out five crucial demands to be met for achieving food sovereignty as: 'Agrarian Reform', 'Protecting Natural Resources', 'Reorganizing the Food Trade', 'Social Peace' and 'Democratic control' (La Via Campesina, 1996). According to La Via Campesina, the first step to take is to

redistribute the land to peasants, Indigenous people, and marginalized groups through nationwide agrarian reform which entails state-supported infrastructure improvement, credit, and investment. Secondly, in order to limit the dependency on foreign external inputs, e.g., agrochemicals, and biotechnology, and preserve biodiversity; natural resources must be well protected and agricultural production must be done in harmony with nature. Next, food must be produced and consumed mostly within the domestic market. The danger of dependency on international trade and agro-exports is directly linked to the survival of the local farmers under the conditions of global competition and price volatilities; national and local food production must be prioritized, and the sector must be supported through protective national economic policies. Another precondition set by the La Via Campesina is to create an enabling environment for social peace. Although rural livelihoods are often disregarded, women and ethnic minorities residing within them experience even more challenges. Establishing equitable and just social relations in the countryside is a must for food sovereignty. Lastly, a democratic environment has to be established for food sovereignty. The access and participation of rural voices, who are often excluded from politics, to decision-making processes are required in the sense that it enables them to decide on the trajectory of their lives. In addition, democratization is essential for healthy, transparent, and open governance that protects people from discrimination and unjust treatment. These preconditions suggest that food sovereignty has a clear framework on what needs to be done and which actions are necessary to take.

Yet, it must be kept in mind that, although in essence, food sovereignty is the “call for peoples’ right to shape and craft food policy” (Patel, 2009: 663), it is also the direct product of agrarian social thought through ways in which it requires world-historical analysis of the current agrarian social relations to be made in order to accelerate meaningful transformation. To explain, one of the strongest arguments on the agrarian social roots of food sovereignty comes from Trauger (2017: 30) who claims that food sovereignty “is as much about changing systems of production as it is about something more fundamental and perhaps more ontologically threatening to capitalist modernity: the transformation of meaning, primarily around land, labor, and exchange.” It is for this reason food sovereignty has many roles to take on from being a social movement to

being the driver of radical change in the established social relations of ownership, land, and labor.

Provided that food sovereignty's base principle is to cater to the needs of rural livelihoods whose rights have been often overlooked and undermined under the corporate food regime; its success is highly contingent upon how well and widely they strive to eliminate other sources of injustices that exist in the system such as race, gender, and class. Not only does it make food sovereignty more complex and multidimensional, but it also gives it the power to be attentive to the ongoing crises at all levels on a world scale. Consequently, rather than attempting to give an exact definition of food sovereignty by treating it as a single form of resistance, it is more appropriate to recognize its all-encompassing efforts to overcome the crisis of the global capitalist system.

2.3.2. Agroecology

In its broadest sense, agroecology is the sum of diverse practices carried out by farmer-to-farmer information transfer that is ecologically sound, socially just, knowledge-driven, locally centered polycultures sustained by small peasants and indigenous communities whose livelihoods depend on their relationship to the land. According to La Via Campesina (2018a: 14), it "is food sovereignty in action." McCune and Rosset (2021) list the pillars of agroecology as being agrobiodiversity, nutrient cycling, energy efficiency, water efficiency, and conservation of genetic resources (2021: 443) and also agroecological practices include; "crop diversification, intercropping, agroforestry, integrating crop and livestock and soil management measures" (Kerr et al., 2021: 1). Therefore, agroecology aims to imitate the natural flow of the ecosystem as if no human intervention were made during agricultural production. In their natural state plants, animals and fungi sustain a complex network of harmonious interaction among themselves (McCune & Rosset, 2021); it is then an alternative "agroecosystem management" (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 92) in contrast to capital-driven, external input heavy management of the farmland. It is a decentralized and autonomous alternative (McCune & Rosset, 2021) to monoculture, pesticide-heavy, fossil fuel-driven industrial agriculture which has been found to be generating positive results in low-

income countries (Kerr et al., 2021). At the center of agroecology, there appears the preservation of the organic and reciprocal relationship between humans and nature, based on care and biodiversity rather than exhaustion and exploitation based on the sense of “belonging rather than ownership” (McCune & Rosset, 2021: 442).

According to Wezel et al. (2009: 503) agroecology “means either a scientific discipline, agricultural practice, or political or social movement.” Agroecology has been practiced by indigenous people and small peasants for centuries and fulfilled the needs of many through establishing a sustainable and resilient farming system based on low external input, conservation of soil quality, and efficient resource use. However, its emergence as a field of study can be traced back to the 1930s whereas agroecology as a social movement against industrial agricultural production became popular in the 1960s and its role as an agricultural technique adopted by the Global North has been on the agenda since the 1980s (Wezel & Soldat, 2009). The first appearance and later popularity of agroecology have been also impacted by the attempts to decolonize knowledge production; taking non-Western forms of knowledge and incorporating them into the framework of academia (McCune & Rosset, 2021: 438).

Although agroecology has been usually confined to within the limits of farmland and agricultural production, Francis et al. (2003) broaden the term by referring to agroecology as the ecology of the food system; making it a more inclusive, diverse, and all-encompassing systems-level framework that also simultaneously come to correspond to the agrarian question of the corporate food regime. This broadening of the term, in addition, makes its application to different cases, scales, farms, and ecosystems possible. Agroecology does not signify clear-cut, strictly defined techniques and practices; at the systems level, it is the processes through which the accumulation of indigenous knowledge and sustainable and fair rural livelihoods are being designed. For agroecology, it is important to take farms as ecosystems (McCune & Rosset, 2021), which is called an agroecosystem (Gliessman, 2014), rather than a mere means of production exogenous to the rest of the environment. Farms are, in fact, key components of the ecosystem and home to biological diversity.

In contrast to Wezel et al.'s (2019) differentiated meanings of agroecology, Sevilla-Guzmán and Woodgate (2013: 32) maintain that this categorization runs the risk of undermining the transformative power of agroecology because politics and practice cannot be separated. Rather they claim that agroecology has its root in agrarian social thought dating back to early Marxist scholars and it is supported by the debates on modernity over the relationship established between society and nature (Sevilla-Guzmán & Woodgate, 2013). Therefore, agroecology is intertwined with the current conditions of the agrarian question and closely linked to the peasant question, which Ajl (2018: 66) argues is to “[b]lend the agrarian question’s national component with an ecological programme.” According to Sevilla-Guzmán and Woodgate (2013), the key actor of agroecology must be peasants, whose emancipation (van der Ploeg, 2014) is intrinsically linked to breaking free from the conditions in which their current struggle with poverty, hunger, and insecurity arise. Peasants are significant in building an alternative; major social movements against the corporate food regime like La Via Campesina and Campesina-a-Campesina, are being led by peasants who also feed the world (Lowder, Skoet & Raney, 2016; Lowder, Sánchez & Bertini, 2021; McMichael, 2015) and sustain the dietary preferences of the Global North. Peasants are also in a unique position as mentioned before; they are self-organized; not capitalist but driven by the principles of capitalism (Amin, 2017). “The peasant condition” as put forward by van der Ploeg (2008: 23) is “the struggle for autonomy that takes place in a context characterized by dependency relations, marginalization, and deprivation.” The difference between agroecology adopted by the mainstream vis-à-vis critical thinking pertains to its relationship to the agrarian question. Akram-Lodhi (2021: 687) strongly argues that the contemporary agrarian question can only be resolved through agroecological agrarian transition. The common denominator both agroecology and the agrarian question share is “being politically built by rural and food-based social movements in the present” (Akram-Lodhi, 2021: 688).

What differentiates agroecology from other forms of ecologically sound sustainable agricultural practices is the political and social meaning it carries in and of itself; a) forgotten indigenous knowledge catered to the needs of different regions based on climate, soil, and b) preferences for autonomous and sustainable agricultural production.

Concerning the first issue, agroecology is labor and knowledge-intensive (Holt-Giménez et al., 2021: 26). Knowledge is passed down from one generation to another and shared from farmer to farmer. As noted, agroecology being labor intensive could be also seen as a way for job creation in the countryside (McKay, 2013). Forced proletarianization of the peasantry into wage laborers with capitalist production can be reversed and re-peasantization through agroecology can be realized (Holt-Giménez, 2006). Secondly, although they are strong alternatives to the existing system, there is a need for actors that will challenge the industrial agricultural production and corporate food regime through their political agency. Although most of the peasant farmers vocalize their struggles and unite under farmer movements, as Marx, Engels, and Lenin drew attention to before; class differentiation among the peasantry is a hindrance to a possible union. Provided that differences in both political and financial interests prevail, capitalist production reproduces inequality even within peasant classes, preventing them from practicing their agency against the corporate food regime. For this reason, it is essential for agroecology to go beyond the techniques for sustainable agriculture and discuss more class struggle, peasant inequities, and the essence of the agrarian question. It is for this reason that “agroecology’s “epistemological, technical and social revolution” is mutually constitutive with social movements and political processes “from below”” (Altieri & Toledo, 2011: 587 as cited in Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 93).

Adoption of agroecological practices by the mainstream has only come upon the condition that they do not pose a challenge to the existing agrifood order strengthened by neoliberal globalization, although in its essence it poses as “a barrier to Green Revolution technologies” (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 92). Critical voices maintain that power within the corporate food regime is concentrated in the hands of “G-8 governments (...), multilateral institutions, monopoly corporations, and big philanthropy” (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 96) which have also adopted some form of agroecology in their agenda. Corporations, for instance, have engaged in agroecology; by rebranding themselves through the appropriation of techniques and discourses compatible with agroecology into the existing industrial food production and agriculture by only acknowledging the side of agroecology that only concerns its technical dimension. According to Holt-Giménez and Altieri (2013: 97), the corporate food

regime has utilized watered-down and depoliticized versions of agroecology, food sovereignty, and sustainable agriculture, which have been considered as “barrier (...) [to] industrial agriculture” in a way that transform peasant-driven practices “into means” to deepen the existing agrifood system. This act of reframing agroecology by the corporate food regime in a narrow sense takes away the essential components of the term which are its “feminist, anti-colonial and anti-capitalist” (La Via Campesina, 2017 as cited in McCune & Rosset, 2021: 439) visions and it must be accompanied by the principles of food sovereignty. On the other hand, Holt-Giménez et al. (2021) argue that addressing structural agrarian injustices is necessary for climate resilience, but agroecology alone would not suffice to tackle such systemic and structural inequities. Because agroecology is lacking political and economic support under the current food regime; rules of the market, states, and international institutions cause disturbance to the proper functioning of agroecology. As a result, Holt-Giménez and Altieri (2013: 97) support the view that the instrumentalization of agroecology by the new Green Revolution will have effects such that the “food regime will likely be strengthened, the countermovement weakened, and substantive reforms to the corporate food regime unlikely.”

Taking into account that the majority of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions are due to current industrial agricultural production (McCune & Rosset, 2021), agroecology also poses a possible alternative to the current responses to the global climate crisis. Looking at the current conditions through which the climate crisis is being discussed, suffice it to say that the climate discourse is divorced from issues of agrarian reform, social justice, decolonization, and development as if they are not deeply intertwined. Consequently, the depoliticization of climate change is being used as an enabling tool for global capitalism to operate with minimum societal pressure. La Via Campesina argues that replacing industrial capitalist agriculture with agroecology driven by food sovereignty could make a profound impact on climate efforts by reducing carbon emissions while also ensuring social justice (La Via Campesina, 2018a). While acknowledging industrial agriculture’s detrimental effects on rural livelihoods, environment, and climate; one should also bear in mind that the global capitalist food system is a combined system of production,

transportation, packaging, preservation, distribution, and advertising supported by extensive research, usage of technology, political action, and private initiatives.

2.3.3. Delinking

The third critical response, ‘delinking,’ a concept developed by Samir Amin, is the “calculated and partial withdrawal from global capitalism” (Ajl, 2018: 66). It is the “pursuit of a system of rational criteria for economic options founded on a law of value on a national basis with popular relevance, independent of such criteria of economic rationality as flow from the dominance of the capitalist law of value operating on a world scale” (Amin, 1990: 62). Although claims over the concept propose a radical systemic change, what would ideally follow delinking, for Amin (1990: xv), is socialism for which it is “the only possible answer for the peoples on the periphery.”

The path to delinking requires state and local elite to regain control over i) ‘the reproduction of the labor force’ by ensuring agricultural self-sufficiency, ii) ‘the centralization of surplus’ at the national level and sovereignty of national financial institutions, iii) ‘the market’ with protective measures, iv) ‘natural resources’ in order to fuel production and lastly v) ‘technology’ for the sake of complete independence from any form of external input (Amin, 1990: 11-12). However, these preconditions to delinking do not imply sudden and complete blockage to any form of international interaction, especially trade. As Amin (1990: 62) repeatedly noted in his works, delinking “is in no way synonymous with autarky;” it is to build national sovereignty over the decisions regarding their own developmental fate rather than surrendering to the “demands of the global system that is, acceleration of growth and accumulation in the centres” (Amin & Bush, 2014). In this process of building national sovereignty, Amin (1990: 62) did not imagine the periphery’s “withdrawal from commercial, financial, and technological exchanges.” What delinking will imply for each member of the Global South, according to Amin and Bush (2014: 113), is the creation of the conditions necessary for flourishing national economies by taking political and economic actions; first they have to unite under political solidarity against the core’s military and economic threats and second, they have to refrain from financialized globalization.

One of the significant contributions of Amin's delinking is the way in which the emphasis is being put on the national level, in terms of the role of the state as well as the domestic market. Amin is widely known for his world-historical materialist framework, however, he claimed that also contrary to other dependency theorists (Amin, 2017), national attempts encompass as much importance as the global system in reforming or revolutionizing the existing order. This is particularly evident while identifying the difference between the developmental state and delinking. The developmental state aims to minimize external influence over domestic capital with increased state control and the creation of national bourgeois to realize the national developmental project. Pérez (2021) explains that the behavior of the local capitalist class whose motives and interests are often unpredictable during periods of crises is the distinctive feature of the developmental state. However, Pérez (2021: 106) also goes on to argue that the developmental state carries a risk, namely "recompradorisation", in which local capitalist "abandons the national bourgeois project and choose to renew strong ties to foreign capital instead." Therefore, this drawback of the developmental state has rendered delinking appear rather strong in its strategy for the elimination of class differences and radical democratization of the state over capital control during the process of breaking free from global capitalism. Emphasizing the national is hence evident in the way in which the developmental state runs the risk of recompradorisation because it prioritizes departure from the global system without granting any key role to national reorganization. Yet delinking bases its realization upon creating appropriate conditions on the national level; radical democratization, political capability to carry reforms, centralized control over resources, expansion of the domestic market, and technological self-sufficiency.

In addition, it is particularly important to acknowledge the prominent role of national class struggles in constituting and perpetuating capitalist order within and outside the national borders. The Global South's engagement with capitalist production cannot be merely based on the external pressure coming from the Global North's capitalist class. Local elites hinder the independent and autonomous development of the Global South, as they have been granted alliance with the capitalists of the core, by exploiting local resources and labor while also never having direct control over the domestic capital

accumulation (Pérez, 2021: 104). This process of the impediment to development locks the periphery in a dependent relationship where they are unable to survive outside of the global capitalist system. Consequently, indebtedness, export-oriented and vulnerable economies act as reinforcing tools of dependency. According to Amin (1990: 19), worldwide expansion of capitalism, uneven development, and dependency between the Global South and North have left the former with two options: adjustment to the conditions of global capitalism or delinking from the system.

It is possible and in fact necessary to detect the direct relationship between delinking and dependency theory. What dependency theorists have argued, like Samir Amin and Andre Gunder Frank, bifurcations such as core-periphery and development-underdevelopment are not stages in a way that one comes after the other as the modernization theory suggests; on the contrary, they are mutually reinforcing. Thus, the periphery cannot make its way up from underdevelopment to development; paving the way for dependency theorists to argue that the periphery must take different actions to break free from this cycle. On the issue of core and periphery, Amin (1990: 2) argued that the periphery is more heterogeneous than the core for the mere reason that core has created a “convergence club” where competitiveness among core economies converged their “income and productivity levels” (Pérez, 2021: 108) and motivated them to sustain a certain level of ‘alikehood.’ The periphery, however, did not experience such a process of convergence, thus members of the periphery shared one commonality, which is “not [being part of the] central” (Pérez, 2021: 108).

Bearing in mind the dimensions of delinking such as the periphery’s refusal to participate in the international division of labor through independent decision-making on the national level (Amin, 1990: 18), political capability to pursue egalitarian reforms (Amin, 1990: 60) and “renovation and improvement of traditional technologies” (Amin, 1990: 67); it is also important to note that, even for Amin, complete delinking should not be taken as a realistic end goal. He (2017: 17) claims that even “seventy percent delinking” would be considered a success. The other variables that could account for the ‘success’ of a possible delinking are the size of the country, its military, and its domestic market (Pérez, 2021: 107). Thus, Aji (2021) sees delinking’s significance in going

beyond criticism and curating a path for the periphery to disengage with the global capitalist system.

2.3.4. Common elements

When assessed together, food sovereignty, agroecology and delinking pose as a very complimentary paths arising from the critical voices. While food sovereignty and agroecology are realms where the small peasantry and the resistance groups are the key drivers of and the ones that will be directly influenced by change, delinking is a much more system-level state-centered recipe for change. Although they might differ in who and where they see the key actor to act against the bounds of the global capitalism and neoliberal globalization, after a close examination of the three critical responses generated for the agrarian question, thus the food crisis, this chapter identifies three common elements shared by each: i) collective resistance ii) land reform, and iii) democratization and political action.

i) Collective resistance

As “neoliberal reification of the market” has the tendency of “downplaying of human agency” (Makki, 2015: 142), critical circles consider social movements to be the key driver of radical change that brings human agency back to the governance of the agrifood system. The intensified agrarian crisis has helped different counter-movements to converge and mobilize under a unified body of resistance (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 95). This possible merging of different social movements can be of profound influence on the formation of the political will that could be the driver of reform and radical change toward tackling the ongoing struggles (Holt-Giménez & Altieri, 2013: 95) as some peasant struggles succeeded in turning into revolutions, as they did in China and Vietnam (Amin, 2017: 172). Critical scholars argue that resistance is neither pre-planned nor intentional in their emergence; the act of resistance comes from those who are struggling, rather than a “handful of intellectuals” (Amin, 2021: 283). On the other hand, forms of resistance are subject to diversity; resistance can be practiced both by adopting sustainable, ecologically sound agricultural practices and/or by establishing direct emancipatory counteractions against the structures of power. For instance, as one

of the most significant and influential social resistance La Via Campesina (International Farmers Organization), is “an international movement bringing together millions of peasants, landless workers, indigenous people, pastoralists, fishers, migrant farmworkers, small and medium-size farmers, rural women and peasant youth from around the world” (La Via Campesina, 2021: 2). What is significant about the La Via Campesina’s organization is the “absence of a sovereign authority dictating what any member organization or country can do” (Patel, 2009: 669) and it is officially recognized by FAO “as a participant in the meetings” (Clapp, 2012: 174). In this sense, collective resistance is an important channel to pressure mainstream circles to implement policies generated for the struggles of the people of the Global South. As mentioned in the mainstream responses, the development of the food security framework has seen major changes in its definition that involve the social dimension of hunger and malnutrition with the intense pressure from the social movements.

However, resistance alone is considered not enough for the pursuit of radical change due to the fact that social movements and resistance groups are highly fragmented and remain only defensive in their efforts (Amin, 2021: 283). The case of “divergences of interest” (Amin, 2017: 174) among peasants who have different status of ownership or political views uncovers that unitary peasant alliance is not capable of natural convergence (Amin, 2017: 174). According to Amin (2017), social movements must shift from being defensive and establish unitary alliance building predicated on not differentiated interests but on common grounds, which Amin (2017: 174) referred to as, “convergence with diversity”

ii) *Land reform*

Land reform has a variety of different ways of implementation as suggested within the critical agrarian studies. However, here, it refers to the restructuring of property rights on the basis of the redistribution of land and resources to those who work the soil (Cousins, 2021). Starting from the historical importance of primitive accumulation with the enclosure of land, displaced landless peasants have been the key actor of the critical agrarian literature. However, questions about the ways in which land reform could take place and which possible actors should/can drive the process remain diverse in their

answers among scholars of critical agrarian studies. Amin, for instance, defends the important role of the state in redistribution. However, for him, the state, as the owner, is not used in its contemporary sense; he is in favor of reforming the state in order to achieve a “system of access to land that is modernized, efficient (economically), and democratic (to avoid, or at least to reduce inequalities)” (2017: 167). On the other hand, Moyo (2011) identifies restructuring and protection of the domestic market to be of profound importance for land reform to fulfill its emancipatory promise.

Although land reform “should be understood as the redistribution of private ownership when it is considered to be unequally distributed” (Amin, 2017: 166), the core debates surrounding its actualization transcend the issue of ownership, who to distribute the land and how to ensure reform’s sustainability and resilience are key questions to tackle. The first question necessitates any form of reform that aims to reorganize agrarian social relations to be interdisciplinary in character and the answer to it must go beyond identifying peasantry as the subject of redistribution. As it has been argued, the peasantry is fragmented in their interest, relation to capital, political vision, form, and level of ownership which are shaped by the segregating conditions of class, race, and gender and make “‘peasantness’ a political rather than an analytical category” (Edelman, 2009 as cited in McMichael, 2015: 199). In this sense, land reform must give priority to those who have been denied or excluded from access to land within the peasantry. To exemplify from the lens of gender, Mukharjee (2021) claims that land distribution to family farms carries the risk of undermining women’s access to land within that family due to widely prevalent gender norms, excessive unpaid labor, and laws on property, inheritance, and marriage. Thus, the gender difference is more apparent in rural than in urban areas (Mukherjee, 2018), women have less access to land than men although they are responsible for 60%-80% of global food production (USAID: n.d.), they often lack legal and political agency to advocate for their rights and they are more impoverished (Agarwal, 2016). Therefore, socially just land reform must be implemented by incorporating those who have been marginalized within the peasantry.

However, it is not only access to land that will determine the well-being of the peasant communities but also the “access to the indispensable means of production on favorable

conditions (credit, seeds, inputs, access to the markets)” (Amin, 2017: 171). The contemporary condition of the peasantry of the Global South is driven by their dependency on seeds, technology, and fertilizers, pesticides produced and sold by the agribusinesses. In addition, they lack needed subsidies and financial support from their governments and fail to compete in the global market, if they manage to access it. Therefore, land reform must be supplemented with the tools and policies needed for productive agricultural production and fair income such as locally supplied seeds, nationally improved technology, a bigger domestic market, and stable food prices.

iii) *Democratization and political action*

The vitality of democratization and political action stems from these three responses’ inherent need to eliminate inequalities of gender, race, and class; ensure a smooth administrative transition to national and local self-sufficiency by including peasants (and workers) in the decision-making process; protect national sovereignty at the international level and create necessary rules and laws to reestablish relations of ownership, appropriation of resources and redistribution of land. More precisely, democratization and political action focus on the role of the state in facilitating social justice and reorganizing land ownership and resource use while also granting political agency to the rural people as a response to the agrarian crisis. It is therefore essential for the state to be capable of and willing to manage state-capital relationships in a way that regards both its rural society and marginalized communities against local elites and foreign capital and its actors.

Democratization and political action can be also argued to be required for the realization of the previous common points, collective resistance and land reform. First, democratic reorganization of the state is essential for collective resistance to access tools of political representation and vocalize their demands. Reciprocally, pressure coming from resistance groups and movements can also help the state to be accountable and transparent. In a way, radical democratization is needed for emancipatory discourses of resistance groups to correspond to political action. On the issue of land reform, the state is assumed to be the authority in establishing social justice between both the large landowners and landless peasants and also among the differentiated and fragmented

peasantry. In this sense, the absence of necessary laws and regulations after the redistributive reform would eventually prove to sustain rural livelihoods impossible; “‘equal’ access to land is not the same as ‘equal’ access to the best conditions for production” (Amin, 2017: 165). The state must be in a position to support the peasantry not only through land reform but also through credit, technology, and inputs and prioritize women’s and other marginalized groups’ access to land.

Amin (2017: 170) argued that the issue of democratization in critical responses “cannot be reduced to the insipid discourse of good governance and electoral multipartyism.”

One must acknowledge that the state in its contemporary sense is the byproduct of racial, class-based, and gendered structures of power and functions as the source of legitimacy. Thus, before radical democratization and meaningful political action, deconstruction of the contemporary meaning of the state by addressing through what ways and under which conditions these meanings have been assigned to the state must take place.

When the state becomes the subject of debates about the Global South, it must be noted that they are mostly post-colonial states and/or had highly dependent historical relations with the colonial powers which have long-lasting impacts on their national institutions, domestic politics, and governmentality. Also, the state is the “long-standing coupler between finance and agriculture” where historically, private actors were “reluctant to invest without state assurances and support” (Martin & Clapp, 2015). The state’s involvement in extractive industries and land grabs in the Global South demonstrate its (and its local elites’) close connections with foreign capital dating back to the colonial past.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has started with a brief distinction between the mainstream and critical perceptions of the food crisis which have been framed differently by both sides. For the mainstream circles, what the food crisis poses is linked to the Global South’s issues around inefficient, limited, and local practices of agriculture coupled with poverty, hunger, and slow development. However, the critical circles recognize food crisis as part of the agrarian question as a dynamic and long-lasting problematique of the global

politics of food and the conditions of the peasantry in the Global South within the context of hegemonic global agrifood system and its reproduction in the political, social, and financial spheres, specially strengthened with the rise of neoliberalism.

The core mainstream argument is based on the assumption that the Global South has failed to fully integrate into the global economy and catch up with its Northern counterparts in modernization. In this sense, the New Green Revolution was examined as the mainstream approach that treats agriculture as a promising sector that could potentially help the Global South to end hunger and poverty with special emphasis on food security discourse through investment in agriculture, improved technology use, increasing market access, and greener agricultural practices. On the other end of the spectrum, three critical responses, food sovereignty, agroecology, and delinking, signify a deliberate effort to highlight the Global South's and the peasantry's independence from external pressure and the systems of oppression and were analyzed based on three common points that they share: collective resistance, land reform, democratization, and political action. Assessed together, mainstream discourses are fully committed to global neoliberalization in principle but seek to make reforms to improve the existing system. Critical responses, on the other hand, aim 'from below' changes to replace the existing agrifood system with just, sustainable, and greener alternatives by actively supporting peasant mobilization and their autonomy. Yet, it can be also argued that critical responses to the food crisis, thus the agrarian question, can benefit more from a systematic critique of the central imperative of capitalist production, which is economic growth and how growth has influenced the agrarian social relations as well as the agricultural production in driving and sustaining power dynamics, ecological breakdown, hunger and social injustices.

CHAPTER 3

FROM GROWTH TO DEGROWTH

The purpose of this thesis is to broaden the discussions on agriculture, land, and peasantry in the Global South within the degrowth idea and movement through the agrarian question literature. So far, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 dealt with the agrarian question, from its origins to how it manifests itself in the current neoliberal regime. This chapter and the remainder of the thesis will aim to bring the idea of degrowth by utilizing its anticapitalist and decolonial elements to think more about agrarian relations. There have been many contributions to degrowth literature regarding its general framework, theorization, and possible transitions while also lacking in-depth examination of specific issue areas such as the exploration of what degrowth implies for sectors like agriculture, health, education, etc. Considering how young the scholarship is, it is no surprise that many areas are waiting to be discovered.

This chapter is composed of three main sections. The first section, ‘Growth: History and Development’ will uncover the growth paradigm, its critique, and what limitations it encompasses for the economic, environmental, and social spheres. It will then introduce degrowth under the ‘Degrowth: History and Development’ section as a term that emerged to address the limits of growth and propose a restructuring of the existing systems. The introduction will be done through an engagement with the existing literature and criticisms made so far for degrowth followed by an outline of its values

and principles. The third subsection will provide a broader understanding as to how the degrowth idea engages with the main region of concern of this thesis, i.e., the Global South. Lastly, the fourth subsection will be allocated to the alternative scenarios proposed by the scholars which aim to explore the ways in which degrowth might unfold. What is more, this chapter will aim to bring the current climate crisis into the framework of the agrarian studies with the help of degrowth literature.

3.1. Growth: History and Development

The Degrowth Declaration at the Paris Conference held in 2008 defined growth as “an increase in production, consumption and investment in the pursuit of economic surplus, inevitably leading to increased use of materials, energy and land” (Research & Degrowth, 2008: 523). Historically, economic growth has been on the forefront of development policies for poverty reduction and social improvement. It has been “the ideological, social, and biophysical materialization of capitalist accumulation” (Schmelzer, Vansintjan & Vetter, 2022: 43) utilized by the Global North. In brief, the Western notion of development, dating back to the 1940s’ era of developmentalism, has adopted growth as an in-built tool to generate wealth, progress and wellbeing, especially for the ‘underdeveloped’ Global South. Similarly, widespread belief in ‘unlimited economic growth’ can be traced back to the postwar shift from coal to oil in production (Mitchell, 2011). Rapid industrialization coupled with Keynesian economic policies that led to postwar economic boom contributed profound economic growth in the Global North, particularly in the United States. Although the 1970s were the era of recession signified by the oil crisis and the failure of the Bretton Woods system, the needed levels of economic growth for high living standards had been achieved by the end of 1970s in the countries of the Global North (Schmelzer, 2022). What triggered another era of economic growth was the neoliberal policies introduced in the 1980s, implemented and led by the Washington Consensus. Extensive freedom given to private initiatives through free trade, privatization, low import tariffs and taxes generated high levels of economic growth for the Global North and these policies were enforced to the Global South by the IMF and the World Bank under the name of ‘structural adjustment’ and in the form of conditionality for loans taken by the indebted countries. As the key actor of

growth, the Global North not only utilized economic growth for its domestic affairs but also to exert influence over the global system both as the beneficiary of economic growth and the reproducer of the growth-driven system. Additionally, through international development and financial institutions which prescribe economic growth to the Global South for their supposed development, growth imperative has become the norm, and the global standard.

By the time the 2008 financial crisis hit, international institutions changed their perspective on economic growth. The OECD proposed a new approach, ‘inclusive growth,’ which is the “*economic growth that creates opportunity for all segments of the population and distributes the dividends of increased prosperity, both in monetary and non-monetary terms, fairly across society*” (OECD, 2015: 84-85). The OECD’s main goal to pursue inclusive growth is to move away from unequally distributed surplus of economic growth and emphasize equality by investing in disadvantaged communities, countries and/or regions, supporting technology, rebuilding trust to institutions and creating extensive network among actors for smooth and inclusive transition to green economy (Veneri & Murin, 2016). The latest discussion around economic growth, however, has been shaped and transformed by the global ecological crisis, climate change in particular. According to the World Bank's report *Inclusive Green Growth* (2012: 1), the current pursuit of economic growth is “unsustainable” and “deeply inefficient” thus it is an impediment to development. Almost all actors have become aware of the necessity to take action to replace fossil fuel driven, industrial and harmful human activities with more ecological and sustainable practices. The New Green Revolution in agriculture, for instance, led international organizations and private actors to question the original Green Revolution’s intense production that resulted in decreased soil quality and increased fossil fuel use. As another example, there have been efforts to advance clean energy technologies in aims to help climate mitigation and adaptation. However, in all the scenarios, growth has remained as the invariable principle of the functioning of the system. The financial and development institutions, states and international organizations continue to emphasize that their aim is to transform the way the economy grows. Changes and reforms such as green agriculture, clean energy, green technology, green cities etc., must comply with economic growth, which is now called

‘green growth.’ According to OECD, green growth is “fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that the natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies” (2011: 9). The transition to green growth rests upon ‘green innovation,’ that “is the development and commercialization of new ways to solve environmental problems through improvements in technology, with a wide interpretation of technology” (World Bank, 2012: 68). The United Nations Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 put ‘green growth’ on the action plan in an attempt to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for a better future for both humans and the planet. This global commitment to sustainable development in line with planetary limits has enabled green growth to reach a wider audience and gain visibility from the policy circles as well as activist groups, NGOs and private sector who converge around the liberal trust to achieving “economic growth that is environmentally sustainable” (Martinez-Alier, 2009: 1099). On this, Death (2015: 2213) argues that green growth signifies multilateral reframing of the ecological crisis “as an economic opportunity” rather than “a threat.”

Economic growth is measured by gross domestic product (GDP), the market value of goods and services which are produced in a given country during a given period of time. Against development and poverty eradication, which are the main purposes of seeking economic growth, GDP measures the overall success of the economic activity of a country. In doing so, GDP neglects a vast amount of non-market variables such as environmental harm, resource exploitation and unpaid housework while also omitting value from its measurement by solely focusing on price (Hickel, 2021b: 2). One may argue that by definition, GDP does not have a claim to measure things other than what it is supposed to. However, the social meaning assigned to GDP is the main problematic; it is still the “single most important policy indicator” (Jackson, 2021: 6) and enjoys social, economic and political dominance contrary to common critique on GDP’s inability to measure well-being, prosperity and development. Although the limitations and inadequacy of GDP was widely acknowledged by many, even by the World Bank (2012: 4) which considered GDP to be “such an imperfect metric,” Jackson (2021: 11) argues, it was the activities and pressure of the young activists that made criticisms more visible.

Economic growth has long been expected to alleviate the conditions of the people by providing them with more and better means necessary for comfortable, easier and modern life. Not surprisingly, it has done so throughout the years by increasing the living standards of millions with advancements in technology, health, food and many more sectors. This success story, however, has failed another millions of people and the planet itself with its ecological, economic and social limits with the unequal distribution of the benefits of growth. One must note that capitalism is not driven by linear economic growth; growth must be exponentially increasing at all times (Hickel, 2018). An increase in economic growth entails increasing quantities of goods and services which in turn leads to exhausting planetary resources more and more resulting in ecological degradation. The contemporary economic activities are using more natural resources than ever before, the highest level per-capita levels of resource consumption in history, with 70 billion tons of raw material extraction (Wiedmann et al. 2015: 6274-6275). This is also evident in empirical studies that show a strong correlation between economic growth and CO2 emissions (Antonakakis, Chatziantoniou & Filis, 2017) and material footprint (UNSD: n.d.).

Growth is a cultural imperative based on capital accumulation and appropriation (Hickel, 2020; Saed, 2012; Spash, 2021); it is neither a neutral economic term nor a natural outcome of human progress. It is an imaginary deeply ingrained in the political, social and economic system despite the efforts to situate it within a depoliticized framework. According to Ajl (2021: 58) growth plays the role of “an ideological glue which binds together people in the Western capitalist pseudo-welfare states” while Akbulut (2019) similarly argues that economic growth is a key mechanism of the making of hegemony, in Gramscian sense, for which it is a leverage of the state against its people, utilized in order to get consent.

Growth, both as an economic practice and mentality, is subject to two, what Jackson (2021) calls and further explains, ‘myths.’ These myths have become the norm about the ways in which economics naturally operate. First myth of growth is the belief that the planet is able to offer more and more every time we need its resources so that everyone can grow their economy periodically and exponentially. The planet has finite resources

and cannot accommodate the pursuit of infinite growth. The second myth is the ‘the more the better’ mindset prevailed in capitalist thinking which justifies the desire and pursuit of extreme accumulation of capital and wealth. Growth mindset has constructed an imaginary road to development, prosperity and well-being that can only be reached via economic growth. What these concepts mean and entail for the people and the planet require in-depth ontological discussions about what it means to live a good life. When combined, these two myths draw a picture where growth is physically and socially unsustainable and undesirable.

Aside from the myths, there also exist ecological, social and economic limits of growth and its dynamics. These three limitations of growth are derived from and build on the works of ecological thought, postcolonial and feminist literatures with active contributions from social movements. First, ecological limit to growth starts by addressing the way in which ecology is inseparable from the economy for its inputs for production are sourced from the ecosystem and waste it produces is released back (Parrique, 2019). When finite planetary limits are being considered, what economic growth entails is using more inputs and wasting more. Considering that earth is a closed system for material resources (Gómez-Baggethun, 2020); an ever-growing economy is physically impossible at the planetary level. Second, growth’s social limit is closely linked to humans and their relations with each other and nature, captured through the strong implications of overproduction and overconsumption necessary to generate economic growth. As Schmelzer (2022: 11) clearly put it “[i]n industrial capitalist society driven by competition and growth, workers are deprived of their ability to determine their own actions and destiny and meaning, functioning like machines, while advertisements, mass-consumption and markets cause alienated modes of living.” This limitation also provides that pursuit of growth is more than likely to put a toll on psychological wellbeing of people (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2015) and reduce their quality of life such that a 40-hour work week leaves no room for leisure time and livelihoods are heavily influenced by the market. Lastly, the economic limit to growth refers to the direct correlation between economic growth and inequality (Rubin & Segal, 2015). Unequal distribution of wealth, generated from capital accumulation, among the peoples of the world further generates power imbalances and social, economic and political

hierarchies. Strong economies have the opportunity to externalize negative impacts of economic growth to weaker economies of the periphery. Historically, if it were not for the exploitation of labor and natural resources of the Global South, high levels of economic growth experienced in the Global North and “imperial mode of living” (Brand & Wissen, 2013: 687) it had created for its people would not be maintained. Yet, the peoples of the Global South remain invisible when the wealth is distributed, and they remain impoverished. What is more is that economic growth is instrumentalized by the Global North and its institutions to reassert hegemonic power relations. In addition to the world systems level of the growth’s economic limit, this is also documented in national, household and individual levels. Marginalized groups within a society, women with unpaid housework, working class in general are all being heavily devalued and dismissed from the allocation of benefits of growth.

Proponents of growth envision a transitional period to a green economy based on green technology, which Grunwald (2016: 1) refers to as, “morally hazardous” (p.1) and “naïve techno-optimism” (2016: 15). According to many critics, “we cannot innovate our way out of the ecological crisis” (Akbulut, 2021: 100); hopes and dreams tied to the possibility of having greener and better technology in the future enough to save the planet from being destroyed by heightened climate crisis is a technocratic discourse to sweep the harsh reality under the rug.

Green growth hopes that the expansion and increasing availability of new green technologies and alternative energy sources will have a spillover effect and prevent fossil fuels from being the default source of energy. Mastini, Kallis & Hickel (2020: 5) criticize this approach to climate mitigation on the grounds that historically, newly discovered sources of energy have always failed to substitute older sources such that discovery of oil did not eradicate intensive coal-based production. An empirical study conducted by York (2012) draws attention to the necessity of solutions to be political more than they are technological. His model finds that availability and expansion of non-fossil fuel energy sources are not likely to cause a spillover effect in displacing fossil fuel energy sources. He adds that climate efforts based on technological

advancements in non-fossil fuel energy must be accompanied by clear political decisions that will oblige actors to shift their sources of energy.

Mainstream green technology responses should be, at best, framed as a short-term fix; they are addressing surface-level problems with apolitical and technocratic ways of dealing with a crisis that could potentially endanger human lives. Transition itself, with infrastructure-building and financing, is both economically and environmentally costly and will require great amounts of material and energy use to fuel the transformation (Vidal, Goffé & Arndt, 2013). It is not unexpected that needed resources for transition will be extracted from the Global South. One of the most popular topics of discussion when it comes to clean and sustainable technologies is the minerals needed to build green infrastructure from electric cars to sun panels, e.g., lithium, graphite, cobalt and copper, which are found in South America and parts of Africa. Producing any clean technology will depend on extraction and unequal exchange of the minerals found in the Global South (Ajl, 2021: 110). The World Bank Group Report has shown that as the demand increases for these minerals, their rate of extraction is expected to increase by 500% by 2050 (Hund et al., 2020). In this sense, green growth and clean technology, also argued by many (Hickel, 2021a, 2021b; Hickel & Kallis, 2020) are also an extent of colonial patterns of appropriation, thus implies recolonization with extractivism.

Besides its environmental and financial costs, even if green strategies proposed by the mainstream hold true, the change must start now. Innovating and adopting green technologies, building appropriate infrastructures, and shifting production for meaningful sustainable and green growth will take time in which fossil fuels will continue to be heavily used. As Ajl (2021: 64) put it, “the slope from bad to very bad is lubricated by the amount of oil and gas capitalism continues to burn during its transitional period.” Then, the problem with green growth and green technology is that it does not imply less resource consumption; the cost of transition and sustaining it will require resources to be extracted from the Global South and processed using great amounts of energy.

What is more, proposing greening the existing pattern of growth as a strategy for tackling ecological crisis is hurtful to the necessary discussions on how new meanings

assigned to growth, which actors took part in the process and actively benefit from it, where to locate the most vulnerable communities within the green growth discourse and what will be the conditions of exchange between the core and the periphery during the transition period. According to Hickel (2021a) there is no point in furthering growth imperative as it has failed to generate desired benefits to all humanity, and it reproduces unprecedented vulnerabilities, inequality and damages within the current global crisis of food, environment and climate. The current growth centered economy is not in line with what the planet is able to offer with its resources and energy. Against this, there has emerged degrowth thinking which explores alternative economic and social reorganization that transcends economic growth and its mindset for the well-being of humans and the planet.

3.2. Degrowth: History and Development

Ecological economists have long been drawing attention to the limits of economic growth (Gerber & Raina, 2018: 353). The unprecedented amounts of harm caused as a result of growing the economy have opened up an intellectual space for people to question moral, economic, social and ecological implications of the existing model and reimagine alternatives not only to the economy but to the way we live on this planet. By nature, post-growth thinking is built on post-GDP approaches (Gerber & Radia, 2018: 353) and there have emerged many recipes and roadmaps for better systems of living which are detached from the perception that growth is the one and only desired way of improving the human condition. Before providing an in-depth look into degrowth, it is beneficial to introduce a-growth as another line of thinking that questions growth and GDP.

Not being necessarily pro or against growth, a-growth has emerged as a midway option to depolarize growth vs. anti-growth discussions (van den Bergh, 2017). What a-growth stands for is the indifference to GDP as the indicator of both development and progress (van den Bergh, 2009) and its main argument is rooted from the concerns over the construction of the concept of growth in a way that signifies economic and social well-being. This line of thought finds it important for policymakers to withdraw from the growth-seeking mindset to open up a space for policies to be made and implemented not

for economic growth but for people. Through this argument, GDP as the indicator of economic growth is not beneficial, thus harmful in measuring levels of economic activity. However, degrowth, the other post-growth alternative, is strictly against economic growth and is definitely not neutral when it comes to GDP. It is important to note that degrowth reframes economic growth as a hindrance to actual well-being and equality of the people, planet and democracy.

What degrowth scholars offer is that it is possible and desirable to have a system that is not only sustainable but also socially and ecologically just. Degrowth does not entail living and doing less; its purpose is to live and do things differently. The general outlook on degrowth offers that neither economic growth nor its indicator GDP is meaningful in development, prosperity, and well-being. However, criticisms against GDP are not unusual even for the mainstream circles as mentioned in the section above, but not in the ways that degrowthers are skeptical. The apparent critique from both sides is that GDP fails to measure ecological debt, unpaid work, and well-being, which have pushed economists to propose different indicators. What makes the degrowth critique of GDP different is that the very idea of economic growth, in which GDP is a part of, engrained to the system at large is destructive and harmful.

According to Schmelzer et al. (2022: 22) what differentiates degrowth from other proposals such as a-growth and ecomodernism is its “politicization of social metabolism.” The main arguments they make consist of voluntary downscaling in resources, energy use, production, and consumption in a collective, democratic manner through detaching ourselves from the growth mindset as if it is the only way for development; prioritizing prosperity and human well-being; and lastly not seeing degrowth as a way of shrinking the current economy as it is (Akbulut, 2021) but as the reorganization of the economy in a way that puts social justice, human well-being, self-sufficiency over profit and growth. What has been significant for degrowth from any other alternative economic reorganization is its “encouragement of self-reflection, balance, creativity, flexibility, diversity, good citizenship, generosity, and non-materialism” and its emphasis on “an increase in free time, unremunerated activity, conviviality, sense of community, and individual and collective health” (Research &

Degrowth, 2010). Shifting the paradigm from an absolute material centered economy to a simpler way of living which prioritizes human and communal values that have been side lined in practices of production and consumption is an unprecedented act towards a radical transformation. Although it is common practice to emphasize reduction in resource and energy use in degrowth discourse, the idea and the scholarship itself is multilayered and offer much more diverse discussions. As discussed above, the critique of growth is composed of its adverse effects and its limits. Degrowth seeks to locate the problematique of growth imperative within its discussions. For that, aside from its planned goal to shrink the economy, degrowth acknowledges and attempts to redefine the meanings and attributes assigned to human and nature, their inherent value and reciprocal relationship.

Degrowth has been getting increasingly popular among scholars since its reemergence in the 2000s in Europe, following the rise of neoliberalism and its accompanying crises; therefore, leaving the literature small yet open to exploration. However, if one were to trace the very beginnings of the critical thoughts that have been feeding the degrowth thinking, even before the term degrowth was coined and systematically worked on, Schmelzer (2022: 3) very recently argued that “the critique of growth is as old as economic growth itself” in which 18th and 19th century romanticism can be regarded as offering valuable insights as to how questioning the ways in which the Industrial Revolution affected people and their surroundings. For instance, although not explicitly, John Stuart Mill hinted at a possible post-growth society by expressing his “dislike of the society springing up around him at the height of the Industrial Revolution” (Jackson, 2021: 13). “I am not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on, that the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other’s heels, which form the existing type of social life, are the most desirable lot of human kind or anything but the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress” (Mill, 1936/1848: 748). Critique of industrial progress and its contradiction with human nature as indicated by Mill shows valuable evidence to dismantle the positive depiction of the industrialization period by the Global North as a unilaterally desired inevitable process for human progress.

Modern problematization of incompatibility of growth with planetary limits started with the economist Georgescu-Roegen's (1971) book titled *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process*, which essentially demonstrated that the Second Law of Thermodynamics -*the Entropy Law*- also applies to the economic activities; "in an isolated system, the amount of energy remains constant (the first law), while the available energy continuously and irrevocably degrades into unavailable states (the second law)" (Georgescu-Roegen, 1986: 3). What he suggested by that "the economic process is entropic: it neither creates nor consumes matter or energy, but only transforms low into high entropy" (1971: 281) while energy is used in the economic process, some part of the energy will always be lost in forms of waste and heat (Akbulut, 2021: 100) and becomes inefficient to use; resulting in increasing pollution, and waste that lead to environmental degradation. He challenged neoclassical economics on the grounds that waste and pollution-free economic growth is physically neither sustainable nor possible and he called for an economic system that will be low entropy; however, Akbulut (2021: 100) adds that "even a nongrowing economy would always need fresh sources of energy and materials" to sustain its steady levels of growth. By laying out the reasons in which limitless growth is not sustainable, let alone non-growth, referring to the physical limits of nature, ecological economics was founded on the grounds on which degrowth is constructed. Yet, the term 'degrowth' made its first appearance in 1972 by André Gorz as *décroissance*, which means reduction in French, and his 1977 book *Ecology and Freedom* also challenged and assessed the growth imperative that is deeply ingrained in capitalism:

"Is the earth's balance, for which no-growth – or even degrowth - of material production is a necessary condition, compatible with the survival of the capitalist system?" (Gorz, 1972, p. iv as cited in D'Alisa, Demaria & Kallis, 2014a: 29)

Degrowth's first official appearance in English was at the 2008 Paris Conference, 'Conference on Economic Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity,' and since then, degrowth has had 14 international conferences. 2008 Conference defined degrowth as "a voluntary transition towards a just, participatory, and ecologically

sustainable society” in order “to meet basic human needs and ensure a high quality of life, while reducing the ecological impact of the global economy to a sustainable level, equitably distributed between nations” (Research & Degrowth, 2010: 524). Since then, degrowth literature has been subjected to increasing interest coming from scholars, activists, political actors and NGOs. According to Schmelzer et al. (2022: 26) what can account for this growing popularity is the direct consequence of the hegemony of neoliberal regime at the international level and the emergence of ‘sustainable development’ discourse which was developed on the belief that liberal order and capitalism can be reformed towards being sustainable and green. They propose that these two cases triggered a collective questioning of whether there can be new alternatives to the existing system, also influenced by anarchist environmental groups in Europe.

The point of departure for the degrowth thinking, as laid out in the 2008 Paris Conference, is to take economic growth as “increasing real GDP or GNP” (Research & Degrowth, 2010: 523) in the sense that seeking economic surplus requires an ever increase in production, consumption and investment and results in increasing use of resources, e.g., material, energy and land, in order to keep up with the growing economic activities. Consequently, increasing use of resources causes more and more harsh extraction, environmental degradation, increasing waste and emissions. Contrary to what advocates of economic growth argue on the necessity of growth for development and prosperity, degrowthers argue that economic growth has failed to deliver its poverty-reduction properties because of the global “unequal exchange in trade and financial markets” (Research & Degrowth, 2010: 523) that created a hierarchical state system based on wealth and surplus creation.

While defining degrowth, different scholars opt to emphasize different aspects of it. Kallis et al. (2018) put emphasis on limiting resource use by defining degrowth as “the radical political and economic reorganization leading to drastically reduced resource and energy throughput” (p. 42), while Akbulut (2021: 98) draws attention to politics and defines it as a “political mobilizer for imagining and enacting alternative ways of articulating society, the economy, and nature.” Weis and Cattaneo (2017) argue that degrowth discourse converged around growth critique and environmental activism.

There have also been attempts to signal degrowth's social aspect by defining it as the “‘movement of movements’, that will act politically to stop the self-destructive path of growth economies, creating a better society along the way” (Petridis, Muraca & Kallis, 2015: 176) in which Demaria et al. (2013) add to this discourse by suggesting a categorization of actors that use different strategies to pursue their form of degrowth: oppositional activism, alternative-building, reformism, research and multilevel action. For some, degrowth emerged and moved for the aim of repoliticizing socio-ecological issues that have been depoliticized by the neoliberal regime (Demaria et al. 2013: 192). Schmelzer et al. (2022: 30) define degrowth as not a unified but a “multivalent term” and according to them “it is not only a scientific research paradigm but also a political project” (2022: 30). Then, degrowth, in a sense, beyond being a mere intellectual concern, embodies many labels from an ecological recipe, a political project, to an advocacy for an alternative societal organization.

According to degrowth, policy direction and corporate behavior have changed direction with the pressures from the social movements concerning the environment, causing power holders to modify their business-as-usual as green capitalism, green growth, sustainable development, technological advancements, and innovations as a means of tackling the environmental crisis, especially within the context of climate change. Haberl et al. (2020); Hickel & Kallis (2020) and Parrique et al. (2019) indicate that green growth is not possible with the current policies; in addition, there is not enough empirical evidence to back it up, and the ones who argue that they have the evidence make an excessively optimistic guess. For instance, Schroder and Storm (2018) assessed the feasibility of the Paris Agreement's goal to keep the temperature below 2 degrees Celsius to mitigate the climate crisis; however, data has shown that the goal is extremely unlikely to achieve if Global North continues to seek growth.

According to degrowthers, especially to Georgescu-Roegen (1971), there is a physical limit to which economies can operate without bearing some kind of an environmental, social and financial cost. That cost might be outsourced from those who created it to those who are vulnerable, or the cost might be left for future generations to bear. Drawing from the current levels of CO2 emissions, pollution, extreme weathers,

increasing resource scarcities and many more symptoms of climate crisis coupled with Western waste and trash dumped to Global South and loss of biodiversity, which what Heikkurinen (2021: 368) calls “residues of development,” the ecological limit to growth has exceeded the sustainable levels, and there has been a growing awareness to tackle with environmental costs of previous economic activities, not only from critics but also from states, international organizations and private sector; although where they see the solution lie differs immensely.

3.2.1. Criticisms

Even though it is apparent that capitalism is everything that degrowth stands against (Andreucci & Engel-Di Mauro, 2019), the movement has been struggling to find common ground with Marxists and socialists. The main divergence among them comes from the degree to which Marxism and socialism are not inherently fond of the anti-growth idea. Although leftist arguments on disaccumulation, dispossession, and non-exploitation are compatible with degrowth, Vergara-Camus (2019) argues that the main issue to tackle from the Marxist point of view is not growth per se but is capital accumulation. He also concludes that if the conditions of capital accumulation are eliminated, sustainable socialist growth can be realized, thus is desirable (Vergara-Camus, 2019). Nonetheless, Kallis (2019), as a response to Vergara-Camus (2019), indicates that growth under any system, be it capitalist or socialist, will make no difference in destroying and exhausting the planetary limits. However, Kallis (2019) also acknowledges that socialism is most likely to be a better alternative with fewer throughputs and more social justice than the current capitalist system, while still realizing growth. The recent empirical study by Vogel, Steinberger, O’Neill, Lamb and Krishnakumar (2021) has found that economic growth and extractivism require higher energy use and negatively affect human well-being -defined as need satisfaction. In this sense, it is also important to note that, although the current literature seems to be concentrating more on transforming the economy through the discussions on extraction, energy usage, and planetary limits; degrowthers argue that it also envisions to transform the harmful practices inherent to the existing economic system that end up causing human suffering and low quality of life. Such issues may cover gender/racial equality,

universal healthcare, education, basic income, fewer working days, more leisure time, local and collective agriculture for healthy, nutritious, and cheap foods that are not harmful to the environment.

When it comes to the other criticisms made against degrowth thinking, despite its promising yet not complete recipe for a just and greener future (Parrique, 2019), the movement and its scholars have encountered harsh critiques from the growthers who argue that degrowth is an idea based on bourgeois environmentalism (Correia, 2012); it promotes recession under the veil of environmental concerns; it is too focused on “local autonomy and struggle” (Schwartzman, 2012) or is prone to green authoritarianism as it is “anti-modern and anti-technological” (Chambers, 2021). However, criticisms do not only come from the growthers; Parrique (2018), as one of the active scholars of degrowth, listed three major gaps in the degrowth literature: no extensive definition of the term, lack of policy proposals, and a non-existent roadmap for transition. Additionally, Weis and Cattaneo (2017) argue that degrowth literature is largely descriptive and lacks hypothesis testing through empirical research.

Another problem voiced against degrowth is related to linguistics; degrowth carries a negative connotation to it whereas growth is seen as inherently positive. In terms of issues around gaining public support, Tomaselli, Kozak, Gifford Sheppard (2021) conducted research by using framing theory to examine public attitudes towards degrowth and mainstream framings of the existing issues and proposals. Among the economic terms which were economic growth, green economy, steady state economy, sustainable degrowth and postgrowth, the participants associated sustainable degrowth with backwardness the most which resulted in the authors’ conclusion that degrowth needs a better communication strategy.

Another common criticism made against degrowth thinking, which will be covered in detail in the coming sections of this chapter, is that degrowth literature is Eurocentric and it will worsen the conditions of the poor people of the Global South as they will be deprived of necessary resources and energy which they need for development. However, the case with degrowth is that, first, reduction in resource and energy use is planned for the Global North and its overproduction-based consumer culture driven extractive

system. In this sense, degrowth only aims to minimize what is already extreme. From this point of view, it can be argued that the Global South would actually benefit from the degrowing Global North; development of Global South is encouraged within this context. Second, degrowth is anti-colonial in character. The scholarship seeks to abolish unjust treatment of the Global South via the neo-colonial tools of the neoliberal regime. Degrowth supports the self-sufficiency and sovereignty of the peoples of the Global South and demands reparations from the Global North for their historical responsibility in both peripheral downturns and climate change.

3.2.2. Values and Principles

Degrowth thinking is built on social and economic reorganization fit to planetary boundaries. For that, human-nature and human-human relations are at the center of the social change, rather than economic parameters and production levels.

Demaria et al. (2013) translates works of Flipo (2007) and Bayon, Flipo & Schneider (2010) from French to English and lists ‘six sources of degrowth’ that occupy equally important space in constructing degrowth idea and feeds the movement: *ecology, critiques of development and praise for anti-utilitarianism, meaning of life and well-being, bioeconomics, democracy and justice*. *Ecology* as a source signifies the inherent value of nature devoid of any surplus it provides to humans and/or industrial production. Dualism and even hierarchy between human and nature found in the Western understanding has an impact on the ways humans perceive the environment as outside of and below themselves whilst the global capitalist system also perpetuates this through devaluing nature by externalizing it. This is apparent in the work of Heikkurinen (2021: 368) which argues that the root causes of the current ecological crisis is growth and “human failure to relate to nature.” *Critiques of development and praise for anti-utilitarianism* is a key component of degrowth that rejects mainstream Western notion of development that is hegemonic, one-size-fits-all and utilitarian. Anti-utilitarianism aspect of this source assigns greater value to human beings and their agency contrary to that of the capitalist growth mindset that assumes people are mere utility maximizers. *Meaning of life and well-being* demands reimagining of what it means to have a good life by rejecting the ‘more consumption, the better’ discourse by defining well-being

without referring to one's participation in the production-consumption cycle.

Bioeconomics source of degrowth is built on Georgescu-Rogen's contribution with entropy law and his implementation of the principles of closed systems to the planet earth. *Democracy* is another key source for degrowth. It suggests that in order to have more fruitful debates on development, well-being and societal organization, radical democratization is a must for which all parties must be present on the discussion table. *Justice*, lastly, signifies the importance of addressing injustices arising from class, race, gender while ensuring well-being of all rather than a rich minority.

Degrowth society is one that is built on and sustained by the principles of conviviality, autonomy, care, and sharing for the sake of nature and human centered way of living. On conviviality, the most influential work comes from Ivan Illich (1973) with his work on technology and convivial tools. His main motive in developing a broad analysis on the necessity of transforming technological tools stemmed from his argument which points to the problematic, yet continuous process characterized the industrial society such that tools used and mastered are means of defining humans and their place in the society (Illich, 1973). According to him, technology and its tools are being utilized in a way that “increases regimentation, dependence, exploitation, and impotence” (Illich, 1973: 33) which he calls ‘manipulative tools’ that “command the user to adapt” (Samerski, 2018: 1640) whereas his proposed alternative ‘convivial tools’ are “adapted and modified by the user” (Samerski, 2018: 1640). Illich's (1973: 34) usage of the term ‘tool’ corresponds to three main instruments of industrialization; basic materials such as screws, hammers or needles, complex machines engineered with basic materials such as cars and planes and institutions that produce knowledge through decision-making, power exertion and material production such as schools, factories and hospitals. His work successfully captures the ways in which manipulative tools of industrial society limit people and prevent them from exercising their autonomy, which is a significant principle for degrowth. According to his analysis, manipulative tools are inherently harmful in that they are artificially and consciously made tools “to produce new demands and new forms of slavery” (Deriu, 2014: 107) for the sake of ensuring smooth operation and continuation of the market.

A car, for instance, is a manipulative tool; aside from its apparent contribution to pollution and emissions, a car is not a mere means of mobility; it is a symbol of wealth and self-image redefining people's self-worth, their right to movement, and society's living spaces that are infested with roads and parking lots when they could have been parks and farmland. The context in which cars are manipulative tools is the industrial urban planning which refrains from building walkable cities, leaving people with no choice but buying cars just to go somewhere. People have to commit to more working hours and take loans to afford not just a car with minimum features, but a car that is comfortable with more safety features which increases the cost even more. One with a car is not autonomous in their mobility, decision-making and way of living. Against this, a bicycle is a convivial tool; it is a means of satisfying a human need without creating more hindrance to its user and surroundings. It is not harmful to the environment, does not serve a purpose other than enhancing one's ability to move and its existence does not violate others' living space and freedoms. In brief, then, conviviality is the principle of collective usage, sharing and exchanging of tools for "distributive and participatory" (Illich, 1973: 26) living so that "no one person's ability to express him- or herself in work will require as a condition the enforced labour or the enforced learning or the enforced consumption of another" (Illich, 1973: 26).

Autonomy, for degrowth, is another prominent principle which refers to people's ability to govern themselves as individuals and their society that they are a part of. Cornelius Castoriadis in *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987) argued that autonomy is a social and political problem of defining and positioning the self vis-a-vis the Other. Within the framework of degrowth, growth-driven capitalist system hinders one's ability to define their self outside of the discourses constructed by the market and its rules. It is also impossible for one to be their own sole decision-maker whilst living under consumer culture. Despite the praised discourses of freedom of choice, individual's or the collective's ability to shape their lives, futures or needs is dependent on the conditions of the industrial system. People are being consciously and structurally guided to over consume and overwork without being given real opportunity to be autonomous and free outside of the capitalist system. The concept of autonomy is also usually discussed together with its relation to Marx's concept of alienation, but autonomy goes

beyond the analysis of ownership of the means of production by bringing social limitations set by the other's discourses (Castoriadis, 1987: 109).

Further, care is another principle for degrowth in order to emphasize the necessity of building human relations based on meaningful connections in which growth imperative lacks while also addressing gendered injustices within the society. Caring for others has been one of the most important features that has helped humans, as well as animals, to build communities and generate emotional bonds fuelled by cooperation, morality and empathy (Decety, 2014). Considering its evolutionary importance, care has been rendered insignificant within the industrial society for which it often involves little to no financial gain and it is seen as inherently women's job referring to their popular depiction as the 'natural nurturers.' Looking from the growth mindset, time allocated to care for children, sick, elderly or those in need is time wasted that could have been used to generate value for the economy. Additionally, as much as there is nothing more human than needing care, those in need are counted as a burden for the state and the global economy through taxation and cost of funding institutions for care. It must be noted that this signifies a radical reorganization of both the state and the society as it requires building an "entire productive structure that takes common sense of intergenerational care and concern and enshrines it as the ethic of conscious social planning" (Ajl, 2021: 62). These concerns over the cost of care within a society manifest itself in gendered expectations. Women, both in the Global North but especially in the Global South, are depicted as the default caregivers and have been forced to play the role of natural nurturer for centuries while their unpaid labor has been devalued. According to D'Alisa, Demaria and Kallis (2014a: 91), the concept of care for degrowth also refers to one's "dedicat[ion] (...) to civil and political activities" which the capitalist system does not allow people to allocate time.

Last important thing to note for the principles of degrowth is its aim to redefine human-nature relationship. It is necessary for capitalism to define what is understood by the concept of 'nature' in itself and in relation to humans and their activities. The concept found itself in the capitalist system to signify "everything that they (capitalists) do not have to or are not willing to pay for" (von Werlhof, 1988: 97). In order to see what

nature has to offer in terms of its resources which capitalist production desperately needs, construction of the meaning ‘nature’ outside of itself has been a necessary precondition for industrialization and modernization. Not only is nature ‘free’ (von Werlhof, 1988: 105), but it is also there waiting to be used as the basis of the ever-expanding production. The Third World, particularly the previous colonies, by supplying the First World with their land and mineral resources, has become the subject of this devaluation of nature which renders the exploitation of nature normal and necessary for progress. It is this very understanding that degrowth challenges; nature has a value by virtue and beyond being the supplier of the inputs needed for production. Humans are devoid of having the sense of belonging to nature, because they have been made to believe in the hierarchy for centuries that situated them above nature and its forces. As the climate crisis makes itself known every day, humans are proved to be helpless and vulnerable against the forces of nature, by not being able to resist or manage the floods, wildfires, and droughts. Thus, degrowth calls for a collaborative relationship between nature and people.

3.2.3. Degrowth and the Global South

As mentioned above, one of the major areas of concern that degrowth often gets criticized is that it is a Eurocentric idea originated from the West through the works of “high-income scholars from Europe” (Weis & Cattaneo, 2017). France, Spain and Germany are amongst the most productive countries when it comes to works on degrowth which is a clear disadvantage showing “a lack of international and even global exchange of views that could, however, diversify and advance the academic degrowth discourse” (Weis & Cattaneo, 2017: 222). In a way, these critiques are meaningful in the sense that the literature is the product of Western knowledge and degrowth has remained strictly focused on growth thus lacking sufficient discussions on accumulation, social hierarchy, and imperialism (Ajl, 2021).

Eurocentric theories more often than not exclude the experiences and the historical background of the Global South in their analyses. Why this is highly problematic has to do with the colonial patterns and their reproduction in the realm of knowledge. Although Gerber and Raina (2018) argue that non-Western thinking has long been producing

knowledge that go hand in hand with degrowth and similar branches of thinking, others are not sure. Many indigenous communities have been built upon and work under values and principles of degrowth such as community, care and conviviality; however, they have been held back from finding a place in the Western social, political and economic thought. Degrowth, for its being increasingly talked about and discussed both within the Western academics and social activists, is an important tool for the West to familiarize itself with different patterns of thinking on how social, political and economic life can be reshaped.

When looking at the decolonial character of degrowth, it is crucial to examine how the meaning of the concepts of growth, development, industrialization and modernization have come to be constructed throughout the years and have been subject to systematic reproduction within the realm of Western knowledge production. Additionally, how these are engineered to signify and artificially build oppositional binaries on racial differences, e.g., developed and underdeveloped, are at the heart of enhancing the scope of degrowth literature. These concepts are nothing short of a common sense within the contemporary neoliberal regime and degrowth aims to deconstruct and reconstruct their previously assigned meanings and connotations.

Degrowth scholars unanimously find colonialism and imperialism together with their continued practices incontestably destructive when it comes to their effects on many contemporary crises such as climate, environment, food and more. This consensus brings the Global South into the picture degrowth has drawn; critique of growth must acknowledge historical struggles, exploitation, and colonization the peoples of the Global South have been forced to endure for the sake of growth in the Global North and any roadmap for a better alternative must ensure just treatment of the Global South.

Capitalist production and the growth mindset have long been exhausting resources not only of the Global North but heavily of the Global South as well. This process leads to the problematization of uneven development between the Global North and Global South, dating back to colonialism. Since then, Global North was able to develop off of the resources and labor extracted and exploited from the Global South, so that they could manage to expand, overproduce, overconsume, and gave the impression that the

development is only achievable through economic growth as a one-size-fits-all approach. This pattern of North-South relationship, on the other hand, also leads to the creation of dependency between core and periphery. Hickel (2021b: 1) argues that “economic growth in the North relies on patterns of colonization: the appropriation of atmospheric commons, and the appropriation of Southern resources and labour.” The core makes use of periphery’s resources to sustain its levels of growth either because core lacks needed resources or can get them elsewhere for cheaper, if not free; although “there is nothing “naturally” cheap about labour and nature” (Hickel, 2021b: 2). By going for the periphery’s share, core steals the available space and setting for them to develop while also creating and widening the wealth gap between the two halves of the world. In this process, both excessive usage of the resources and accumulation of wealth at the expense of the other’s poverty have played a major role in the current state of the global economy and environmental crisis. It is upon this historicization that has made degrowthers argue that the planet has enough resources for everyone if it is used within the planetary limits. Other than resource and labor exploitation, the Global North and its institutions have successfully managed to confine the Global South within the operations of the neoliberal regime. International trade, for instance, is one of the most powerful tools of the regime which has been used for centuries in which Wiedmann et al. (2015: 6275) argues that it is the single most necessary tool for countries to satisfy both their and international market’s material needs, as their domestic resources would not suffice to meet the extra demand. It is also the case that the Global North often exercise cost-shifting (Kallis, 2018) when it comes to the ecological damage as a result of outsourcing excess productive activities; “appropriation and externalization are fundamental to the growth dynamics of rich societies, the balance of power within them, and the stability of the imperial mode of living” (Schmelzer et al., 2022: 170). Then, it is safe to say that despite the hardship of imagining an alternative system that produces and consumes less while being embedded in cycles of overproduction and overconsumption, autonomy and redistribution are keys in managing planetary resources.

One point of departure for degrowth literature to include decolonization in their analyses is to examine historical responsibility of the Global North and climate debt within the context of the current climate crisis. It is widely accepted that the climate change

experienced today is anthropogenic- fully caused by human activities; however not everyone's share is equal in causing or contributing to the climate crisis. Historically the Global North has not only been responsible for resource extraction and exploitation that have made economic growth possible, but it is also the biggest emitter of GHG (Hickel, 2020). The impacts of colonial experiences and their continuation in capitalist production have also revealed how they manifest themselves as increasing levels of CO₂, waste, pollution, and deforestation. However, the main bearer of the climate burden is the Global South, as empirical studies have shown that it is highly likely for the climate crisis to affect and deepen in the Global South first, even before manifesting itself in the Global North (Kemp et al., 2022). On this, Ajl (2021: 61) makes a crucial point, if all emissions were to stop today, the Global South would still experience the harm of historical emissions produced by the Global North (p. 61) which for him "climate debt is not a slogan, it is a common sense" (2021: 6).

The North's historical responsibility in emissions and extractive practices since the industrial revolution is also rooted from its colonial past; however, this case failed to generate any meaningful reaction from the international audience. Agreements, conferences, and speeches made for climate mitigation and adaptation on the international level address the need to invest in and adopt greener technology, support people who are vulnerable to the effects of climate change and create a common climate budget to ease the financial burden of the actors. However, they also demand Global South to adopt 'clean energy' and contribute to climate efforts by sharing the burden and cost of climate mitigation who do have neither the resources nor the historical responsibility (Neumayer, 2000). The cost of bearing the effects of climate change and the cost of going green are both too high for already impoverished people to afford. What is more, historically, the industrial conditions under which climate crisis exist in the first place and intensify are neither created by nor operated for the peoples of the Global South. The unequal and unjust treatment of the Global South after their resources, labor, and wealth have been stripped off for centuries that were used to fuel industrial production on the other side of the world must push the Global South to frame their international call for reparations through the historical responsibility and climate debt debate. In this sense, while degrowth focuses on the environment and climate crisis

as the big picture, it is also decolonial in character. Just as the scholars of food regimes and contemporary agrarian question, degrowthers challenge the industrialization/development and poverty/underdevelopment equations which they see as Eurocentric and are unable to reflect the reality of multiple meanings of development/progress that differ in the local communities while poverty is the outcome of the Eurocentric developmental recipe generated when rules of the market are applied to the Global South. In light of this, degrowthers bring attention to the anti-imperialist and anti-colonial character of the movement; as Hickel (2021b: 1) put it, “degrowth is, in other words, a demand for decolonization.” Initially, degrowth is for the wealthy nations of the Global North “where further growth has obviously become undesirable,” (Weis & Cattaneo, 2017: 227) and only imagines emancipatory social change for the Global South where growth is clearly needed for better living conditions and well-being of its people. Degrowth also engages with the Global South when it comes to analyzing what implications degrowing Global North entails for their livelihoods. Then this begs the question of what degrowth would look like in the Global South where the conditions and dynamics around economic growth and its effects greatly differ from that of the Global North which will be explored in the next chapter.

3.2.4. Alternative Scenarios

Degrowth is “an umbrella concept” (Mastini et al., 2021: 3) that unites a vast number of actors from different backgrounds such that the answers to the question of how to actualize a smooth transition are numerous, yet all ensure one thing; transition will be diverse and gradual. It must be noted that degrowth projects and the recipe for “utopia” (Kallis & March, 2015; Muraca, 2017) is one of the most criticized and open to exploration areas of the scholarship. Transition from a growth-driven, ever-expanding economy to a degrowing economy accompanied by what it entails for social, cultural, ecological and political spheres is surely a complex and challenging task. What will this transition look like? How will it take place? What will trigger the much-needed change? Will the transition be implemented and/or forced by resistance groups, politicians, or both? While Ajl (2021: 73) asks how realistic the alternative roadmaps for transition are, Gómez-Baggethun (2020: 4) adds the question; “[h]ow is the political utopia of

degrowth different from the technological utopia of modernism?” On the other hand, for ecological economists, large scale decommodification (Hickel, 2020) is what is needed for post-growth transition (Gerber & Gerber, 2017: 551), and for others, degrowth calls for disaccumulation (Foster, 2011). Schmelzer et al. (2022: 48) consider “collective power and the development of new kinds of common sense” of high importance to put degrowth into practice.

It is important to note that degrowth, as it is also laid out by its advocates, is a process and a means to an end. The act of degrowing the economy is a means until the economy reaches a sustainable equilibrium at a point where the end goal is to be able to live with and sustain a steady state economy in which consumption and production are being held stable considering the overall material and energy use. Yet, this action plan is not unitarily accepted by all degrowthers and many pathways have been offered. However, the overarching idea behind all the recipes for action calls for “right-sizing” of the economies both at the global and local level (Research & Degrowth, 2010). The concept of right-sizing is not only attributed to the ways economic activities are being handled but also about considering the unequal relationship between wealthy nations and those who suffer from poverty in the process. Substantially, what degrowth aims to achieve, although it puts humans at the center of its analysis, is not about changing or shifting the individual consumer behavior (Hickel, 2021b: 2) by convincing everyone to consume less. Rather, it is the system that degrowth acknowledges as the problem in need of radical change which underpins and enables capitalist production and endless growth. Accordingly, this systemic level change indicates that individual level solutions divert the attention and shift the blame from the private sector and their harmful activities.

Tackling with and challenging the growth mindset, however, is not only about deconstructing narratives around economics and politics. The capitalist growth-seeking thought is so deeply ingrained in every structure that governs the lives of people, it has become the default; the change requires a radical, complete and all-inclusive transformation that will penetrate every structure that has ever existed and reconstruct the narratives around production, consumption, development and progress and including elements of human progress, simpler living, and wellbeing of all. Surely, this level of

downscaling which degrowthers propose is not and will not be an easy task; but at the same time, tackling the climate crisis by focusing on growth is not an easy option either (van den Bergh & Kallis, 2012: 914). Ajl (2021) argues that any transition concerning energy, technology and material use will imply a change in the social hierarchy because the ownership, right to use, and reproduction of these three are being enabled and supported by the capitalist system and its institutions. What is more, he adds, the degree to which reduction in material and energy use, just social reorganization based on redistribution and public ownership are realistic goals to pursue and they belong to the realm of 'the political.' The system under which we live today is not an inevitable product of the laws of nature or the final stop of human progress. It is the direct product of consciously made political moves and decisions, thus its change, however radical it may be, will also necessitate political action.

For this reason, any degrowth recipe for transition, how good they might be both in theory and practice, needs to consider many layers of social and political life at the local, regional and international level while also emphasizing human and community relations. Any slight change in the growth mindset will have tremendous effects on systems like agriculture, education, tourism, healthcare, housing, and even in knowledge production. While also attempting to redefine and reassign new meanings to exploited, overworked, and deprived human and nature, degrowth is also a recipe for a utopia built on green, sustainable, care-focused and collective practices of living supported via political acts, social movements and joint demand to live a simpler and fulfilling life.

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter has introduced and investigated the degrowth idea by first providing an overview of economic growth and what it implies for humans and the planet at the social, economic and ecological levels with the help of a brief historicization of the concept. Measured by the increase in goods and services produced in a country, economic growth has successfully managed to become one of the most valued indicators of economic, political and social well-being. As this chapter locates growth at the heart of capitalism, discussions were primarily focused on the inherent dynamics and discourses of the growth paradigm. Dating back to colonialism, the Global North has

managed to constitute a system that revolves around and perpetuated by overproduction and excess consumption fueled by resource extractivism, appropriation and exploitation. Consequently, the pursuit of growth has become hard to sustain both for people and the planet. Distribution of the benefits of growth has created a wealthy minority while excluding the majority of the people from the process, especially of the Global South, leading to extreme injustices. As for the planet, one has to note that planetary resources are limited and not every energy can be recycled; in the process of production, some energy will always be lost, referring back to the laws of thermodynamics. Against this hegemony of growth, degrowth emerged from Europe, both as an intellectual concern and activism, in order to imagine a human-centered world in harmony with planetary limits. According to degrowth, it is of crucial importance to replace fossil fuel driven, extractive, excessive and harmful practices inherent to capitalism, and transition to a simpler and convivial system that will be participatory and enable people to be autonomous. Some of the necessary actions to be taken for degrowthers are planned and proportionate reduction in the economies of the wealthy nations of the Global North, universal healthcare, fewer workdays, democratic decision-making, and radical reduction in the production levels of fossil fuel heavy sectors. Although degrowth transition is a picture that is hard to draw; its principles and values are very familiar to many non-Western communities around the world. Degrowth envisages the Global North to pay reparations for their historical responsibility in causing excessive carbon emissions since their industrialization. Although they have made the most contribution to climate change, they have also managed to outsource both ecological and economic costs of the crisis. In addition, for the Global South, alleviating the conditions of the people is of crucial importance. Degrowth is in favor of only degrowing the North, so that the South could finally have room to expand and have the opportunity to grow to a healthy and sustainable level. Ultimately, it is rather naive to expect a radical outcome based on technology and more growth to bring a meaningful change to crises of ecology, climate, economy while also providing better standards of living for the peoples of the Global South.

CHAPTER 4

AGRARIANIZATION OF DEGROWTH

AND

THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Agriculture has been “an immediate source of well-being and fundamental field of interaction with nature” (McGreevy, Rupprecht & Niles, 2022: 1) for humans for hundreds of years. Food is also nothing short of essential for human survival, culture, and the functioning of the capitalist system. Degrowth, on the other hand, both in theory and practice, corresponds to not only economic degrowth, but also environmental and just reorganization of the society together with respect to planetary limits. Such a broad definition of degrowth, as it is expected, paves the way for many questions, debates, and discussions, one being agriculture and agrarian social relations. For this, this thesis is concerned with rethinking agriculture and the structures of the agrifood systems from a degrowth perspective with the help of agrarian question literature. While connecting degrowth with the agrarian question, this chapter will draw on degrowth works on nature, agriculture, and the Global South which has been rather limited so far. As the questions of land, peasants, and agriculture are still open to exploration in the degrowth literature, this thesis aims to broaden the issue area of degrowth concerning the questions around agriculture, peasants, land, ecology, food, and climate from the world-historical perspective as a way to uncover underlying historical dynamics in agrarian

social relations and what it implies for a degrowthian utopia. This chapter also draws on critical agrarian studies and postcolonial literature to provide a historically engaged analysis of the agrarian social relations for the agrarian question. In addition, this thesis also benefits from the social movement and environmental justice perspective to bring the Global South into the picture as the main location of concern.

This chapter, the title of which is inspired by a recent article by Zehra Taşdemir Yaşın (2022), argues that the broadening degrowth with the help of the agrarian question intersects with the environmentalization of the agrarian question and “the agrarianization of the climate justice movement” (Taşdemir Yaşın, 2022). The chapter, then, is structured as follows; first, nature will be conceptualized as the intersection of agriculture and degrowth, building on the previous chapters. Then, the Global South will be located with the aim of starting a conversation about what degrowth implies for the region. Later in the chapter, an engagement with the existing literature, as an overview of the limited works which can be considered as an attempt to connect degrowth with critical agrarian studies, will be provided. What follows afterwards will be the key components of agrarianization of degrowth, as the main argument of the thesis; social movements, pluriverse, agroecology, and delinking.

4.1. Agriculture, Degrowth and Nature

The historical importance of agriculture and food production in constituting distinct world historical eras, as has been also brought to light with the food regime theory, must be the background scene in which the agrarian degrowth will be built on. Historically, agriculture and food have been one of the most significant determinants and triggers of economic growth as exemplified in the colonial food trade, mass production of wheat for the post-war era by the US in the forms of food aid, and sustaining and reproducing the growth-driven system as seen within the financialization of the agrifood system with increasing trade liberalization of the neoliberal era.

The global agrifood system, as defined by McGreevey et al. (2022) is the “contemporary knowledge, institutions, infrastructures, practices and crops that define the predominant patterns of food production and consumption” (p.1). It has been the common criticism

generated by the critical scholars that the contemporary conditions of the agrifood system are out of balance and in desperate need of radical transformation. The agrifood system through the ways in which it was constructed, established and has been reproduced again and again throughout the decades on the basis of international trade and comparative advantage for the purpose of producing more and more food and/or 'foodstuffs' for the cheapest price is the significant depiction of the capitalist influence on the way we produce, process, advertise, transport and consume food. The way in which this has been realized is by extensive and heavy dependence on fossil fuels, Global South for their resources, including land and labor, monoculture farming, and genetically redesigned plants. Agro-industrial corporations, as the key actors of the agrifood system, are built with business models which deliberately benefit from this unsustainable agrifood system.

Under degrowth, agriculture should not be imagined as adopting a single, unified and undifferentiated form of agricultural production. Unlike the Soviet experience based on state-owned large-scale farms, the degrowth scenario offers multilevel and needs-based techniques and systems for production. For instance, both small farming and large-scale farming composed of small farms under a cooperative alliance can function according to the needs of the community they cater to. This coexistence can be also referred to as 'balancing' the human needs, used by Chayanov, as Gerber (2020) emphasizes, which corresponds to equilibrium in supply (labor) with demand (human needs) in farm work, resulting in no growth imperative within that farm.

One of the key components when thinking about agriculture is land and in the agrarian question and degrowth, land is open for debate. While indigenous people define land in relation to their culture and traditions, the general framing of land more often than not, does not move beyond its productive duty as a means. The commodification of land, land grabs and extractivism threaten indigenous and peasant communities' material and spiritual ties to their land and resources through privatization and gentrification of their community. Indigenous communities are hindered as they fail to pass down their traditions and knowledge as their members have been forced from their land and turned into mere labor power to be used in the cities.

Another component to be discussed is the peasantry. Growth and its impact on the agrarian social relations have direct consequences on the livelihoods of the peasants, contrary to the mainstream framing of growth as a means for development, progress, and well-being. As one of the key actors of the agriculture-degrowth nexus, the peasantry is the group composed of not only those who engage in traditional farming practices but also the farmers who are forced to use machinery, external inputs, and such to compete through its production capacity for survival. In this sense, small-scale agricultural food producers and family farms are considered part of the peasantry as well. As evident, the peasantry in itself is diverse and usually fragmented in terms of its class dynamics. Farm size, ownership status, labor status, and usage of external outputs vary from peasant to peasant and grant privilege to some while leaving others behind. One of the major points often reiterated within the mainstream proposals is the assumption and/or argument that small peasant farming is inefficient and not productive enough to meet the global demand for food; it cannot come close to what industrial large-scale farming has been offering which is supported with technologies (GMOs, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) used for more yield at a low cost, state subsidies and monetary support from the private sector as well as global development/financial institutions. However, this ‘myth’ has been debunked by many studies done on the small peasant farming’s capacity to produce enough to feed the world (Lowder et al., 2016; Lowder et al., 2021; McMichael 2015; Ricciardi, Mehrabi, Jarvis & Chookolingo, 2018; Shiva, 2016) and they have been shown to do so by using far less external input. In small-scale farming, the surplus value generated from the agricultural production is recycled to be used in the same farm that it was generated for the aim of sustaining a smooth, healthy, and economically sound operation and reproduction of the farm and the farm work. However, the conditions through which small peasantry can feed the world are predicated on shorter supply chains, a state-supported internal market, fair prices, and a democratic political arena where peasants are represented and practice their agency.

Local production carried out by local peasants is of vital importance regarding the knowledge and skills learned towards efficient and ecologically sound usage of agricultural techniques appropriate for the local climate, environment, and soil of the community. This way, dependency on external inputs of the farm such as pesticides,

herbicides, and heavy machinery is drastically reduced and compensated for with the practices suitable for the geographical condition. Attempting to produce food all year round through monoculture for the sake of generating fast and mass yields necessitates undermining the conditions of the climate, environment, and soil of the land which in turn forces farmworker to supplement the land and compensate for what it is aching with the fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. Initially, production is only a part of the whole operation of the agrifood system today. Value chains are of great importance and degrowth, as well as the critical agrarian scholars who are in favor of shorter value chains both for their impact on the environment through transportation and its accompanying carbon emissions but also for the producer-consumer relationship which is basically non-existent due to the middlemen and increasing costs throughout the process. Local production and local consumption, then, operate as both green and sustainable alternatives to the current value chain. On this issue, as cited in Gerber (2020), Kumarappa's work on local agricultural production and short value chains supports the viewpoint that "distance between the producer and consumer hinders the moral assessment of an exchange" (Gerber, 2020: 247) which creates an illusion in terms the real cost and the value of the goods produced in the eyes of the consumer. Also keeping in mind that the concentration of power is at the hands of agribusinesses within the context of the neoliberal food regime, the peasantry has lacked necessary and much-needed attention by the international institutions of development, finance, and trade, in addition to political agency and their right to participate to the decision making process.

Last and probably the most vital component of agriculture is nature. It has become clear that nature, in fact, is not suitable for forever expanding/eternal/continuing exploitation and it cannot afford to continue to be used as the source of inputs to capitalist production. Natural resources have their limits, and so does the land, with quality that shows a gradual decrease in its soil quality. Nature is devalued, objectified, and undervalued under the global capitalist system and has been done so through the construction of perceptions by its institutions. What nature cannot offer, capitalists dream of creating its substitute (von Werlhof, 1988). Modern-day capitalist thinking suggests an alternative path to access what nature has been offering for centuries for

free; it is a technological breakthrough that will eventually eliminate the dependency on nature. Be it carbon capture technology and lab-grown foods, it is a plan that prioritizes substitution rather than reparation. It is even the case with human labor which is being planned to be transformed into a fully automated and commodified, humanless version of labor power in the future. This is what von Werlhof (1988: 111) defines as the capitalist promise of “emancipation from nature (...) and its limitations” which “would be the end of this mode of production.”

One of the leading lines of thinking on the relationship between degrowth and nature comes from Büscher and Fletcher’s (2019, 2020) ‘convivial conservation.’ Explained by building on the dualism and even hierarchy between humans and nature found in the Western understanding; it is convivial conservation’s goal to establish a balance. Western perception of the human-nature relationship has an impact on the way humans perceive the environment outside of and below themselves whilst the global capitalist system also perpetuates this through devaluing nature by externalizing it and the costs it ends up bearing as a result of the processes such as production, packaging and transporting. Rather than conservation by keeping people outside, convivial conservation aims to conserve the environment with the people. Then, for degrowth to be meaningful for nature-human relations; first, a dual understanding of humans and nature must be eliminated by reconnecting the two and making them harmonious counterparts. Second, degrowth should work towards changing people’s perception of nature; from being a means to an end to a living system not for people but with people. While the utilization of nature in the global capitalist system is shaped mostly by extractivism, another equally important element is human labor, which has also been devalued by the forces of capitalist production. As Hickel (2021b: 2) directly puts it, “there is nothing ‘naturally’ cheap about labour and nature.” The role and the perception surrounding nature-based agricultural production in the neoliberal era demands revising the nature-agriculture relationship and its journey of going from the main substance for human survival in the early history of humanity to an inefficient, slow, and not optimal form of production for societal needs. Is it possible to reverse the roles and define agricultural productions vis-a-vis nature, not surplus value and large-scale commodification of food? Is it possible to see the harmony between agriculture and nature that once saved humanity, or are we

stuck with the fairly new construction of industrialized agriculture devoid of any concern for nature and how it is being utilized during the production process?

4.2. Global South

Agriculture and degrowth hold a vital role to the extent that the current food system is responsible for one-third of total greenhouse gas emissions, with agriculture having the highest share (Crippa, Solazzo & Guizzardi, 2021) with large-scale industrialized farming practices supported by machinery, which is dependent on fossil fuels. It is also problematic that the commodification of food, capitalist farming practices, and increasing food security have a terrible effect on human and ecological well-being, especially that of the Global South. The legitimate concern in terms of degrowth's neocolonial tendencies arises from its desire to outline "what ought to be done to solve problems of global relevance in the Global North" (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019: 248). One of the reasons why degrowth has been greeted with suspicion is the way in which it originates from the Global North, given that it is not new for the Global South to be held responsible for applying Western ideas to their day-to-day practices. Although, Jason Hickel (2021b) with many others strongly bring a decolonial side of degrowth thinking to the discussion, to what extent it is meaningful and even ethical to impose such an idea to the other half of the world who are not able to grow, let alone degrow remains one of the key questions to discover.

One must acknowledge that the conditions of the peasants of the Global South are contingent upon the drastic measures taken within the context of degrowth in the Global North. Any policies, measures, and decisions taken for political, economic, and social relations in the North will have a mirroring effect and direct impact on the Global South. This is not only because the states are highly connected to each other through an invisible tie of globalization but it is also because the North is highly dependent on the South's labor, resources, and market for the further well-being of the neoliberal order and the capitalist international system.

Global North's one of the biggest channels to have a relationship with the Global South is via cost externalizing in terms of its environmental, economic, or social costs resulting

from the capitalist dynamics at work in sustaining Northern lives and keeping up with their consumption habits. The living reality of the peoples of the Global South is built on the rural struggles which are for their survival as well as their living spaces. In this context, there should be no surprise about the increasing concerns voiced for the conditions of the peoples of the Global South under the neoliberal corporate food regime.

Degrowth must prevent rural livelihoods, especially that of the Global South, to be the bearers of the Global North's social and economic burden under the veil of international trade, aid and politics. The discussion on degrowth must be led by the Global South. Degrowth must also exercise self-reflexivity in order to prevent the scholarship from being Eurocentric and fall into the trap of 'white man's burden.'

On the other side of the story, framing degrowth as only applicable to wealthy nations and the Global North as a whole would be a fallacy. Arguing for the degrowing North while South continues to expand up until a certain level of welfare further perpetuates the neocolonial, destructive, and capitalist view of development.

4.3. Connecting Degrowth to Critical Agrarian Studies

From the most of literature, degrowth and agrarian relations are missing from the critical agrarian studies, especially the biophysical implications of growth (Bernstein, 2010: 301). One of the few works that emphasize the necessity to create a scholarly connection between degrowth and the agrarian question is Julien-François Gerber's 2020 article "Degrowth and the critical agrarian studies" which he provides several ways that the two can enrich each other coupled with a roadmap for future research while also expressing the gap in the literature, making it very compatible for the degrowth literature and even suggests to be called "agrarian degrowth" (2020: 255). Other than the ways in which the two have so much in common both in their theorization and activism, Gerber (2020) also draws attention to ways the two can help not miss each other's blind spots. Gerber (2020) argues that adopting a broader agrarian framework for degrowth is beneficial because it can manage not fall into the trap of 'the agrarian myth' which refers to the ambiguous and romanticized view of the peasantry, and their ecological practices

without considering historical contexts and class differentiation existing within that class by the degrowthers. Growth myth, on the other hand, he argues is a fallacy that degrowth helps agrarian scholars avoid falling into. Gerber and Raina (2018: 353) argue that post-growth should be “world systemic and rooted in class analyses.” From the agrarian perspective, labor and land must not be devalued by situating agriculture at the bottom of the ‘stages of development.’ Taken together, the incorporation of the Global South to the issue area of agrarianization of degrowth is the key component of decolonizing degrowth and freeing the agrarian perspective from the empty promises of growth of any kind, including socialist growth.

It is that the democratic and collective ownership of the processes of production and the economic growth it follows, is needed for well-being and development and it is different from capitalist growth and exempt from having ecological consequences and going over planetary limits. Gerber (2020: 242) argues that the agrarian question can get one step closer to degrowth by adopting ‘the growth question,’ which is, according to him, “the deployment of growth(ism) in society and ecosystems, and on its relations with post-growth politics.”

Gerber (2020) suggests that the agrarian question and degrowth axis would benefit from “socialist degrowth,” which he argues would also improve the arguments of both sides; however, as the exchange among Kallis (2019) and Vergara-Camus (2019) has shown in the third chapter, this question begs a complex and in-depth debate between socialism and degrowth. The main point of differentiation in degrowth literature from the leftist circle, especially from Marxism, is its “critique of any growthism” (Gerber, 2020: 238) where socialist growth is possible and desirable for the leftist circle.

Considering the agrarian question, food sovereignty seems to be the one area that unites both pieces of literature. As already mentioned in the second chapter, food sovereignty represents an economic and social breakthrough from the neoliberal project and capitalist agricultural production, paving the way for human and environment-centered farming where food is not a commodity but a way to connect with nature with indigenous and local practices. Even though Gerber (2020) believes that La Via Campesina, one of the strongest advocates of food sovereignty, is cautious about being

aligned with the degrowth movement, two members of the movement, Salzer and Fehlinger (2017), wrote a piece in explaining how two movements, around food sovereignty, have a bright future based on solidarity.

Another point raised is from Roman-Alcalá (2017) on how degrowth can be applied to the food regimes theory by Friedmann and McMichael (1989). As McMichael (2013) argues, neoliberal corporate food regime is prevalent; however, what Roman-Alcalá (2017: 124) suggests is that a new food regime would be beneficial to establish believing that degrowth would contribute to the theory by bringing “new forms of social power [which involves] governments, market actors and civil society” to the existing theory. Although so far it seems to be that peasant movements and food sovereignty are present in the existing literature regarding agrarian degrowth, there is so much more to discuss and assess with future research.

On the energy consumption of the agrifood system under degrowth, Amate and de Molina's (2013: 27) work on Spain's agrifood system opens up a discussion about the extensive energy consumption not only of the production process but also of the “transportation, packaging, processing, distribution and preservation” processes that make it possible for foods to come from the farm to our table. For a sustainable agrifood system Amate and de Molina (2013) support economic degrowth accompanied by organic farming and substantial transformation in the consumption patterns of the society towards a diet centered around less meat and more locally grown vegetables.

One of the real-life examples of a degrowthian society has been brought to light by the work of Kallis et al. (2022) in which the article explores two remote Greek islands, Ikaria and Gavdos, in relation to concepts such as ‘islandness’ and ‘Southern thought’ by Cassano (2012: 1) based on “slowness, moderation and conviviality.” The concept of Southern thought coined by Cassano (2012) refers to the unique way of living around the Mediterranean through slow, timeless, and carefree practices for a meaningful life where he specifically refers to Greece and other countries of the Aegean Sea. Related to it, islandness corresponds to the conditions peculiar to belonging to islands; their geography, differentiated way of living, and values arising from being isolated from the

mainland and generating a common identity around being an islander (Kallis et al. 2022: 3). What makes these two islands an example of a degrowth society is their food consumption locally produced agricultural products, seasonal festivals that encourage leisure time and a sense of community, low energy use, and minimal integration to the global financial system which are all tied back to both physical and spiritual isolation from being an island and the spirit of islandness coupled with the Southern thought.

One of the works comes from Scheidel, Ertör and Demaria (2021: 649), titled “Degrowth in agrarian and fisheries studies” which puts Karl Marx’s concept of ‘metabolic rift’ at the center of its argument that refers to the disconnection among humans and the nature within the capitalist system and its tendency for ecological destruction. On the collaboration of critical agrarian studies with degrowth, Scheidel et al. (2021: 652) argue that they both “discuss similar overarching questions” and “offer complementary perspectives.” This article also engages with the concept of ‘blue degrowth’ to explore the conditions of the fisheries under degrowth in terms of the seafood production that is subject to the same capitalist growth mindset for the marine aquaculture sector. Unlike Amate and de Molina’s (2013) emphasis on organic farming and changing consumption patterns, Scheidel et al. (2021) add agroecology and transforming governance of the agrifood system as important elements that degrowth can offer for a better agrifood system. Thus their proposal is to have decentralized governance for the global food system, including both the agrifood system and the fisheries, based on the efforts of the small producers.

The last work comes from Gomiero (2018) who explores the possibilities of GMO and organic farming in degrowth. He argues that GMOs which are the product of extensive processes of biotechnology are also the direct product of technocratic monopolies of corporations and agribusinesses both in science and the financial system and have no place in any egalitarian alternative scenario based on social justice and the well-being of the ecology, let alone degrowth. For organic farming, although Gomiero (2018) sees a better future for it in degrowth he also argues that organic farming is an agricultural system of wide range of practices and it may or may not qualify under certain measurements. For instance, while it enables nutritious and external input-free

agricultural productions to be grown, as it has become popular in the Global North, it is also open to exploitation and advertisement in terms of sustaining healthy diets for the rich.

In light of these works, this thesis aims to outline its own pathway for how food is produced by who and for whom under whose governance within degrowth by utilizing the agrarian question of food and environmentalization of the agrarian question, hinting at the work of Taşdemir Yaşın (2022).

4.4. Agrarian Degrowth

In the light of the works produced, concepts and key terms explained and discussed so far, in this section, this thesis will draw its own guide for the agrarianization of degrowth for the end result; the agrarian degrowth. In this sense, this thesis argues that for transformation i) social movements; as its general characteristic ii) pluriverse; for its farming techniques ii) agroecology; and for its world systemic realization iv) delinking will be argued by this thesis as the vital and necessary components of the degrowth utopia for agrifood systems.

4.4.1. Social Movements

From Marxism to degrowth, one criticism has unified all skeptics against the leftist proposals; the impossibility of replacing the existing structures and achieving a large-scale systemic change. This legitimate concern, for Kallis (2018), can be best explained by utilizing Gramscian hegemony. According to Kallis (2018: 138), alliances, movements, and independent groups that are often deemed small, and lacking the necessary power to trigger change, are “incubators” of change whose everyday acts and ways of living is a consistent attack on the hegemony, and on the common sense of the neoliberal capitalism. Living one’s life as a form of resistance is a tool like no other to deconstruct and reconstruct the discourses, policies, and standards set by the institutions of growth-driven capitalism and neoliberal globalization. For that, this thesis appoints great importance to grassroots movements in both abolishing the rules of the global market and creating new discourses and debates in order to open up a space for alternatives to grow and flourish. However, it would also be a mistake to consider

grassroots movements enough in themselves. They are also bound by the limitations of the systems of law, politics, and economics and resist the giants of the system; states, international organizations and agribusinesses (Gerber, 2020). In the end, grassroots movements pose a consistent inconvenience for the system, bugging it at all times on all levels and weakening its strong framings and perceptions while also being fragile and limited in its systemic level actions. The remaining of this section will utilize existing social movements, food sovereignty, environmental justice movements, and climate movements, that pose a great opportunity for the agrarianization of degrowth. Although these three are definitely not distinctively separate and individually operating, they have overlapping yet different aims and concerns over the crises of food, inequality, environment and climate.

It is necessary for social movements to be politically engaged to advocate their right to live, produce and consume food. By assigning state a “facilitative rather than commanding role” (Roman-Alcalá, 2017: 135), social movements must utilize many different channels of action and activism such as policy advocacy, discourse and narrative construction, resistance, education, and media visibility. Diverse and wide range of social movements contribute to the broadening of the degrowth framework, as each movement tackles different aspects of the crises. They should not be analyzed as individual movements but rather the parts of the whole.

Degrowth can be considered to be falling short in going beyond generating activism based discourses around climate crisis and environmental degradation in the context of limitless growth seeking capitalist system. For a solid base, degrowth can benefit from incorporating conceptualization of the capital-nature relationship as well as the issue of labor and ownership (of land by the peasantry) in its analyses by engaging more with agrarian social relations and how they reconfigured today’s crises and questions. However, in fuelling bottom-up peasant-led social movements, naive views of the peasantry must be abolished as rural peasant communities have been known to sustain gendered and racial injustices within their localities.

First, one of the strongest instances of collective mobilization and social movement is food sovereignty movements led by the farmers of La Via Campesina. Food sovereignty

is not only practiced on the land at the production level but it can also realize sovereignty within the agrifood system's processing, distribution, and consumption steps (Fehlinger, Jost & Rail, 2022: 215). The food sovereignty movement seeks sovereignty "partly *with* and *through* states" (Roman-Alcalá, 2017: 136) and does not seek to eradicate or abolish the state and its agency from the equation. One of the pillars of a degrowth society is autonomy, which encompasses food autonomy and food sovereignty. Roman-Alcalá (2017: 121) points to a critical point about the food sovereignty movement led by La Via Campesina that the main actors who are being represented within the movement are the farmers themselves, who directly work the land and engage in agricultural production and not professional activists which do not create a distance among who is marginalized and who is representing the marginalized but rather ensure unity and collective identity (Roman-Alcalá, 2017). The degrowth movement guided by the peasantry could potentially transform the idea from being a mere environmentally-demanding social activism to one that acknowledges the disproportionate social dynamics arising from class, race, and gender. The peasantry as a differentiated class, according to the literature on the agrarian question, as the main actor of the degrowth movement in food, agriculture, and ecology carries a unique role in bringing politics forward while addressing ecological and social contradictions of growth-driven capitalist production and its perpetuation by the neoliberal institutions. In this sense, although it has not been fully adopted, degrowth must be considered as a door for a greater and broader critique of the economic organization and the ontological questioning of the values of the capitalist system. Roman-Alcalá (2017: 119) also indicates that peasant farming has the potential to be effective in degrowth in the sense that "politically engaged movements of producers, whose productive surpluses are invested into non-growth ends with support of governments, will construct post-growth economies." Degrowth farmers will be the key for bottom-up transformation and societal change in the Global South.

Secondly, environmental justice movements are a great connection point for the agrarianization of degrowth. Environmental justice, today, is associated more with the context of the Global South's economic activities and how it affects the Global South and its vulnerability to climate change, which has been also termed "the

environmentalism of the poor” by Martinez-Alier (2003) as he argued that now “ is the time in rich countries for socially sustainable economic degrowth reinforced by an alliance with the ‘environmentalism of the poor of the South” (Martinez Alier, 2009: 1100). Environmental justice movements are argued to be theoretically lacking compared to how strong and impactful their activism is on the streets of the Global South against the prominent and active actors of the neoliberal regime. As Gerber (2020) cites, Martinez-Alier (2012) sees a great opportunity in connecting degrowth with environmental justice movements on the theoretical levels as much as they have already been entangled on the practice level.

Thirdly, the climate movement is also an opportunity that has set a fertile ground for politicizing what has been consciously prevented from being political. The climate movement is also prominent as it has also found itself a firm place in the Global North, compared to environmental justice movements taking place only in the Global South. As state and institution-level global action for climate mitigation gained momentum in recent years, but also with the help of increasing pressure from resistance groups, politics of climate offer a possibility for politics of agrarian change to be more visible and discussed widely by the actors of the neoliberal regime. Degrowth’s both emergence and expansion as an idea have been enabled by its strong emphasis on climate change politics. Climate politics is the point where degrowth idea and movement have found an opportunity to converge with the agrarian question and its areas of concern. It is now central that climate change to be added to the scope of the contemporary agrarian question and its accompanying issues such as consumption patterns of the Global North, carbon-fuelled production to sustain this pattern, and its implications to where these productions are being made possible through the exploitative extractivist usage of the land, water, and resources alike. Not only is climate an emergency for the whole planet and its habitants, but it is also increasingly alarming for the rural Global South and its people’s conditions under which global capitalism is strengthened by the neoliberal regime. The trend towards the peasants taking space within the climate movement has been identified by Borras and Franco (2018) as “agrarian climate justice” and by Taşdemir Yaşın (2022) which she conceptualizes as “the agrarianization of the climate justice movement” as part of a process by which

agrarian actors came to be in the front lines within the resistance groups formed against global capitalism and its accompanying issues endangering their wellbeing and livelihoods. The current state of the global environment and the politics of food pave the way for the agrarianization of the climate movement as the agrarian people have been joining environmental movements (Taşdemir Yaşın, 2022: 27). The agrarianization of the climate movement can be uncovered in terms of its developmental process in recent years. Land often corresponds to the meaning attached to one's community, culture, and history as it is also a way to feel connected to nature and life itself. While this thesis is cautious against assigning an overly romantic meaning to nature outside of what it is for the humans and their existence, land's historically and socially prominent role especially within the indigenous communities is an argument that is hard to overlook. Climate justice movements are, then, essential for which degrowth and the agrarian question get very close in theory and practice as well. From this instance, both bodies of literature have proven the central role carried out by activism not only as a form of resistance but also reimagining what could be done radically differently to replace the existing capitalist system.

Aside from these three streams of social movements, degrowth must also benefit from other social movements as well. For instance, the gender movement is a key ally for the agrarianization of degrowth. The contemporary agrarian question has brought gender into the agrarian picture which is an epistemic ground around which degrowth has also built its discourse through taking nurturing out of gendered context and assigning it to the whole of humanity, not only to women, with the responsibility and incentive to participate in care. At best, the ideal strategy for utilizing social movement for the agrarianization of degrowth should include alliance building across and solidarity among movements.

4.4.2. Pluriverse

Pluriverse, in its origin, was developed within the post-development literature, term coined by the Zapatista movement which corresponds to the challenge of theorizing and implementing an overarching system fit to all of the peoples of the world. 'One world' discourse reinforces Eurocentrism by guiding each international actor towards neoliberal

globalization under the umbrella of monolithic Western modernism and developmentalism whereas pluriverse refers to “a world where many worlds fit” (Escobar, 2011: 139). In fact, even an attempt of creating a unified system for all is already unnecessary for the pluriverse proponents. The Global South and limited parts of the Global North have created and sustained many possibilities, although they have limited scope, for alternative systems and societal reorganizations due to the historical, geographical, and cultural differences within their communities and regions such as ‘ubuntu’ from Africa that refers to the prominence of collective identity and the holistic framework of the all living systems, ‘radical ecological democracy’ from India which proposes direct participation of all people in the decision-making process for which they are the key and central actors to live within that ecology and make use of the resources and ‘buen vivir’ from Latin America for the harmony of the humans with the nature. The list for sure can be longer, but the main argument shared by all is the ability to decide the moral, ecological, economic, social, and political life to be chosen by those who will live under it. More precisely, post-growth thinking, although it has been predominantly popular in the Global North, is not peculiar to Western thinking; it has significant philosophical roots in the Global South. In the search for alternatives, varying backgrounds in history, economics, geography, and politics may lead to different experiences of food sovereignty and degrowth. As usually given examples, Mediterranean countries like Greece and Spain have regions in which some degree of degrowthian scenarios have taken place (Kallis et al., 2022).

Kaul et al. (2022) propose that the pluriverse concept can be of vital importance in broadening the ‘sustainable development’ discourse which is constructed by the institutions of the Global North with the aim of bringing everyone to the level of the West in terms of what Eurocentricly considered a ‘good life.’ Even though this concept is a new door for further discussions about possible ways of redesigning just, democratic, green, and sustainable life emphasizing the essential role assigned to community, nature, and local reorganization; Kaul et al. (2022: 1156) also argue that these alone will not suffice in terms of their ability to “save the world” rather, it is a conversation starter, as a result of which many realities can flourish in the future.

4.4.3. Agroecology

Degrowth's central idea is to shrink the size of the economy and use far less energy to sustain our lives. Low energy and less external input for agriculture, under degrowth, requires agricultural practices different than the agro-industrial complex has adopted within the global capitalist system and neoliberal corporate food regime. Widely used methods of 'modern' agriculture with the wide adoption of the principles of the Green Revolution have led to millions of people going hungry, especially in the Global South, while extreme quantities of cheap foods are being produced and wasted every single day in the Global North alongside with environmental damage caused by the production, processing, transportation processes of the modern agrifood system. What is more, modern agriculture is molded into being a hegemonic sector in which agribusinesses are the main actors handling the system operation while creating a binary between the Global North and the Global South in terms of who makes the policy and investment and who produces the food. The peasantry of the Global South is directly subject to land grabs, extractivism, and resource exploitation without any acknowledgment or self-sufficiency in their food production. At the systemic level, the modern agrifood system operates and benefits from the cheap nature and labor of the South while the surplus value from the production itself is distributed within the borders of the North. Against these problems, agricultural practices under degrowth, this thesis argues, must be in the form of agroecology, and the agrifood system must be decolonial, self-sufficient, local, socially just, and environmentally friendly.

As discussed in Chapter 2, agroecology is a field of science, an agricultural practice, and a form of rural resistance against the value-centered, monoculture, GMO, and mass production in agriculture. It is a low-input agricultural production technique which is one of the most vital features to have for any activity under degrowth. Breaking free from the bounds of fossil-fuel driven machinery, fertilizers, pesticides and hegemony of foreign capital must be the first aim to be achieved under degrowth. It is also the case with agroecology that for a well functioning food sovereignty, this sustainable and green practice must be the tools for which local communities break free from the international food market and the forces of neoliberal trade.

Aside from being an agricultural practice, such as organic farming, agroecology is a unique activity in itself in terms of its oppositional stand against the land-grabs, extractivism, rural dispossession, ecological damage and agrarian capital accumulation. It is also a proposal for a just and convivial life. Short value chains and an agroecological agrifood system does not only bring producer and the consumer closer physically, on the basis of conviviality, care and sense of community, it also brings people together (López, 2018). In addition, considering the climate crisis and its scale, any alternative must be capable of mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. For that, resilience of agroecology together with its harmonious relationship with nature pose as the best viable option for a practice under degrowth. Agroecology is also directly related to the concept of pluriversality as the weather, soil, and water conditions of each region differs, so do the needs and wants of the communities; paving the way for many different alternative agroecological practices to coexist within the same world.

4.4.4. Delinking

However, local, group, and individual level action does not pose as the one only viable option to transform the agrifood system. At the international level, members of the Global South must take action against the Global North and its pervasive institutions in enabling and reproducing systemic inequalities and injustices through cost shifting, exploitation, and extractivism. At the state level, Global South members must acknowledge their position in the international era vis-a-vis the ‘modern’ and ‘industrialized’ countries and position themselves accordingly to the heavy peasant population it has. The divide between the world systems of core and periphery is conditioned by the framing of the Global South as the peasantry of the world whereas Global North is the administrator, economist, innovator, and teacher. For that, Samir Amin’s delinking concept provides a meaningful answer to one of the most criticized aspects of degrowth; what is the possible source in which Global North can potentially find the motivation to reduce its extensive use of resources and cheap labor; they will be forced to do so. Delinking “from the subjection of the external relations of the national and popular society to the imperatives of the complex stages of its internal development” (Amin, 1990: ix) provides an opportunity for the Global South to refuse to partake in

asymmetric core-periphery relation that sustains itself through resource extractivism and cheap labor. Against capitalism's believed capability to "homogenize the world based on the rapid and general development of the forces of production" (Amin, 1990: ix), the Global South is envisaged to diverge from the dependency which will leave Global North to either rely on its domestic resources and labor for production or pay more to Global South for what they have been using to sustain the existing system which sees growth as the precondition for development.

One of the significant roadmaps for the Global South to follow proposed by the proponents of the degrowth movement is to let the South grow until a point where welfare is achieved for a 'better life' which, this thesis argues, would contradict the very core of the degrowth idea in terms of the ways in which its conceptualizations of a better life, well-being, and development. There is no definitive relationship between growth and well-being (Gerber, 2020; O'Neill, Fanning, Lamb & Steinberger, 2018). What well-being and good life mean could redefine growth that would correspond to the growth of not the size of the economy or the resources used to sustain it but the size of the sustainable society and the degree to which social needs are met via just, democratic, green and autonomous practices of living and producing. Economic growth for the Global South, let alone for anyone, is not the guarantor of a good life, well-being, or welfare for its inhabitants and environment. Letting the South grow further legitimizes the notions of modernization theory and the supposedly clear relationship between economic growth and development. This reproduction of the inherent contradiction of capitalism and development within the degrowth discourse could hinder the essence of the idea and what it can possibly achieve for the Global South and its people. In the Fifth International Conference on Degrowth, in 2016, India and China were given as two prominent examples of Global South's long-awaited progress and growth following their praised material growth framed by the mainstream capitalist Northern actors of the international arena (Lang, 2017). According to the conference, concepts such as the "right to pollute" (Lang, 2017: 1105) used within the debates regarding the rising powers of the Global South who were once colonized and exploited, and now it is their turn to harm are no better but worse, for what degrowth or any other radical left framing attempt to achieve. To reiterate and emphasize again, degrowth is not degrowing the

North in its material capacity of production and consumption only, it is a radical transformation and a revolutionary change in the ways in which we live with reality through assigning meaning and perceiving them within the capitalist system. We have to search for new meanings and seek alternative ways to define how we want to work, rest and live in the system that we built and sustain. Then, while degrowth plans to shrink the Northern economies, it also envisages a system where the economy is not the sole guide nor at the center of policy-making, governance, social life, and ecology. How this can be achieved, especially for the Global South, demands help and support from the literatures outside of degrowth, as it has not been able to expand its response to this question yet. Global North and Western knowledge production has deep roots in what can be considered the whole of ‘the academia’ and changing the hegemonic relationship of knowledge are no less important nor easier than changing the hegemonic relationship in economics. For that, the Global South has to cut ties with every single tool of the capitalist system that prevents them from achieving and exercising their sovereignty in any realm, be it political, academic, or economic. Then, this thesis proposes Amin’s delinking as a crucial and vital way for the Global South to separate itself from the very system that keeps them marginalized, including its domestic affairs, knowledge production, resource use, and even food production. Delinking, also for Samir Amin, does not necessitate complete isolation of oneself in a closed box that refuses any kind of outside interaction. On the contrary, it proposes complete sovereignty to be realized for the sake of people’s right to decide how to live their own lives, how to establish alliances with other countries, how to produce, what to produce, what to hear, and how to retell that story within the borders of their own environment. Delinking is also a must for degrowth because degrowth is only viable when it is world-systemic and international (Gerber, 2020). In that sense, degrowth, for this thesis and its aim to connect it with the agrarian question, is the reduction in throughput in the Global North with a shift that deconstructs and reconstructs their internal and external relationships while also giving the Global South the space which has been stolen from them to produce their own knowledge to guide the path that they want to take without enforcing or kindly ‘guiding’ them with the degrowth idea. Dictating even the most emancipatory idea, after all, is the most *unemancipatory* action to take. In that, what degrowth can

look like in the Global South is the delinking shift for its countries to have a better space to finally listen to their internal voice that they only had a chance to listen to just before their colonization. In this sense, degrowth and the agrarian question propose a decolonial, anti-capitalist, and anti-neoliberal globalization framework for both the Global North and the Global South but the way in which this comes to realization differs in terms of delinking of the Global South from a system in which they had no intention of neither building nor fuelling or being a part of.

4.5. Conclusion

This thesis focuses on the relationship between the agrarian question and the degrowth idea by situating them within the concerns around the world-historical context through their shared values. The main goal is to shift from a neoliberal corporate food regime to an agrarian degrowth food regime, which is an autonomous, democratic, and convivial economic organization supported by governments and international institutions, carried out by civil society, and centered around local food production, short value chains, care for ecology, reproduction of sustainable practices and community. To achieve this, this chapter has made four key arguments in relation to the necessary elements for the agrarianisation of degrowth. First, multilevel and radical social resistance is essential in triggering meaningful systemic change. The agrifood system must be governed by the principle of autonomy in personal and collective agency realized within the social relations of care and justice. Second, there is no point in attempting to generate a unitary system that will be the sole alternative to neoliberal capitalism for a better agrifood system because, referring to the pluriverse concept, societal backgrounds, wants and needs are different and we can have many worlds within our planet. Third, the agrifood system under a possible degrowth scenario must adopt agroecological, sustainable and local agriculture for ensuring food sovereignty. Fourth, at the international level, the Global South must delink to realize its agency, autonomy, and sovereignty. Degrowing North will have a direct impact on the social, economic, and political relations of the South. Delinking and constructing new forms of unity and alliance will minimize the adverse effects of a degrowing Northern economy on the Global South.

However, this thesis also emphasizes that resistance and change in one step are not enough, change in one sector (government, market actors, and civil society) is also not enough. There is no single approach or technique as to how agriculture under a possible degrowth system must adopt. As evident with pluriversality, degrowth acknowledges and even encourages differences to be visible also in the decision-making process and policy implementation. This chapter argues that, for degrowth to incorporate and connect its scholarship with the agrarian question and the conditions of the agrifood system, the agrarianization of the degrowth must take place so that a clear and sound agrarian degrowth can be realized. The agrarian perspective on degrowth will not only broaden its intellectual dimension but also the political and social realm of the movement.

CONCLUSION

This thesis is motivated by the possibility of creating a fruitful collaboration between the agrarian question and degrowth. Degrowth has been one of the most radical yet increasingly relevant utopias for the betterment of the relationship humans have with their planet, which has been so far defined vis-a-vis the capitalist and growth-driven economic system. This thesis argued that degrowth has so much transformative potential to drive meaningful change at the advent of a catastrophic climate crisis and other crises of global capitalism and neoliberal globalization. As a young literature, degrowth must be explored at all levels by all actors in order to create a cohesive, harmonious, and viable alternative under which all living things could live. One of those areas is agriculture, rural development, and the conditions of the peasantry that are still under-explored within degrowth. This thesis investigated how the agrarian question can help degrowth broaden its research on agriculture, land, and the peasantry. As an emerging literature, degrowth could benefit from more meaningful interaction with Marxist thinking and agrarian transitions. In this sense, the agrarian question, for its analysis of agriculture's role in the capitalist transformation and capital accumulation and how capitalism has failed to generate the desired capitalist transformation in the agricultural sector, is an excellent opportunity for degrowth to expand its horizon. During this attempt, one central concern is to make and recognize peasants and farmers as the main actors with an agency rather than constructing a discourse for them. Their struggles and livelihoods must be the primary lens through which degrowth should view the transformation. Another crucial concern for this thesis is to give utmost importance to exploring what agrarian degrowth would imply for the Global South, as it is the land of

the marginalized, impoverished, dispossessed, and disadvantaged. Anything planned, constructed, and realized for and by the Global North will have immense and sometimes unpredictable effects on the Global South, almost creating a butterfly effect. For that, this thesis explored both bodies of literature in detail within their historical contexts, internal debates, and legitimate criticisms against their arguments.

Degrowth is a scholarly concern, activism, and political project aiming to downscale wealthy nations' economies by reorganizing society and social relations towards a low entropy, frugal, simpler, green, democratic, and just life for all. Degrowth thinking stems from acknowledging the biophysical limits of our planet and arriving at the conclusion that we physically cannot continue to aim for ever-increasing growth, nor do we sustain the existing levels of it. Climate change, ecological damage, and social injustices are consequences of the growth imperative, which is essential for capitalism and the smooth functioning of its system. It is based on a planned economic degrowing through self-imposed limits, which acknowledges that the current global crisis requires radical change that will put humans at the center rather than capitalist production and endless growth in the driver's seat.

The agrarian question, on the other hand, is a scholarly attempt that had problematized the capitalist transformation in the rural and has been transformed into a literature to historically conceptualize the relationship between the peasantry, their access to and utilization of capital and their conditions under which the capitalist dynamics which have been shaped through power asymmetries. The agrarian question is far from an isolated scholarly attempt to theorize agrarian social relations under capitalist transformation. The agrarian question of the 21st century encompasses all related to rural livelihoods while also incorporating contemporary concerns over the environment, gendered, racial, and class-based injustices, power dynamics existing within the agrifood system, and their manifestations in our day-to-day lives from a global perspective. In that sense, both the agrarian question and degrowth problematize the global capitalist mindset peculiar to Western developmentalism and modernization. However, in terms of the limited number of works produced, they are close yet far from each other. This thesis saw a great opportunity that should not be missed in broadening degrowth and revising

the agrarian question. In this sense, while degrowth is a movement based on the economic theorization of environment for societal reorganization also finding its way as street activism, the agrarian question is a theoretical attempt in which to address rural voices on the streets and their struggles for survival under neoliberal globalization within the framework of the capital-nature relationship. It is for this very reason that this thesis is motivated by the endless possibilities of creating a nexus between theory and activism by introducing degrowth to the agrarian question. For that, the method utilized in this thesis is based on exploring possible connection points and their conceptualizations within a world-historical framework.

The existing literature on the agrarian question and degrowth has been shaped by concerns around the preliminary steps to take in order to reconnect both pieces of literature and what to do for future research. In addition, degrowth is mainly focused on the Global North and the ways in which the North can shrink its economy. By utilizing the agrarian question, degrowth literature engages with the Global South more and rethinks its framework from a different geographical angle through decolonial, gendered and racial perspectives. Decolonization through degrowth also suggests eliminating oppressive and racialized power dynamics that prevent knowledge production from indigenous communities. Indigenous knowledge on land, food production, resource usage, and waste management and access to that knowledge have been limited and replaced with efficiency-driven modernization and technological innovations from the Global South.

How essential the growth imperative is for the Global South needs an in-depth analysis of development. The belief in growth and technological advancements as the vital ingredients for progress is similar to treating the capitalist development model as the only viable and desirable way of developing. What is more, what degrowing Global North implies for the Global South has been somewhat “undertheorized” (Dengler & Seebacher, 2019: 246) within the literature. The transition from a growth-dependent economy to a degrowth one will differ in the countries of the core and periphery. Therefore, the recipe for transition will have different implications and outcomes for the different halves of the world. Drawing on the past and current experiences, it is safe to

say that for the Global South, continued fossil fuel-driven capitalist expansion will mean more privatized lands with more extractivist activities led by the agribusinesses who are in those lands for mere profit maximization and further growth. This will eventually lead to increasing rural poverty and lack of access to land and food with more dependency. Neither the planet nor the economy can afford expansion and growth from now on. Establishing a nexus between the agrarian question and degrowth on the theoretical level opens up a space for both what degrowth in the Global North implies for the Global South and where the Global South stands within the degrowth movement.

On the issue of how to connect the two pieces of literature, this thesis identified four critical components of agrarian degrowth: social movements, pluriversality, agroecology, and delinking. The two pieces of literature share a common view of an alternative system that is anticapitalist, sustainable, decolonial, equitable, and just with an emphasis on solidarity, autonomy against consumerism, communal care against capitalist individualism, and sufficiency against growth fetishism. This thesis argued that small steps are significant towards a possible transition period which makes local and regional level social movements crucial in their efforts and ability to trigger discussions, construct discourses and offer new ways of thinking.

Social movements must also be supported through the pluriversality of degrowth and agroecology of the agrarian question. Both during the transition and post-transition eras, societal needs must be shaped through pluriversality, meaning that any alternative system adopted may be subject to change from one place to another, yet serve the same purpose of being green, just, and sustainable. Agroecology, in this sense, is one of the best possible options for agrarian degrowth. It is suitable for pluriversality and realizing sovereignty over land, production, and resources. It is also a call for locally sourced, nature-based production practices without highly processing the products, transporting them overseas, and using fossil fuels to source their production, mobility, and consumption. As much as social movements followed by pluriversality and agroecology, this thesis argues for Global South's delinking from the world capitalist economy as the key to establishing its independent economy and sovereignty. By refusing to enable the Global North to access its resources, such as raw material, labor, and land, Global

South's delinking will then force Global North to shrink its economic activities without the South's resources. Delinking is a systemic-level strategy toward agrarian degrowth.

There is also a need for a paradigm shift on what development and growth mean and what they imply for the Global South by recognizing the struggles of the rural livelihoods and treating rural relations, agriculture, and peasants as active components of development rather than a hindrance to modernization. The shift from a capitalist development model to an all-inclusive, locally decided decolonial-inspired development model that does not exclude peasants, agriculture, and land points to a radical understanding of the world. Additionally, there is an immediate need for a collective shift in the meaning of economic growth from the driver of development to being neither desirable nor sustainable. Reimagining alternative systems/development models free from existing hegemonic relations and power dynamics while challenging neocolonial development patterns is the main point of discussion that this thesis wants to contribute.

When it comes to the limitations of this research, the most significant limitation comes from degrowth's utopian nature, which is making it difficult to put forward concrete and step-by-step guides on how to drive the transition and realize a radically alternative system. This thesis acknowledges that while both degrowth and the agrarian question have many common grounds to build on, they also have a major and core conflict regarding that socialist growth which is both wanted and desired within the Marxist stream in the agrarian question. In contrast, degrowth is fully committed to rejecting economic growth at all costs. Future research on Marxist theory and degrowth can be highly beneficial for agrarian degrowth and its reimagining. Although this thesis' focal point is land and the peasantry in a degrowing agrifood system, future research can potentially build on this relationship by incorporating the public health aspect of the issue, especially concerns around emptied calories for the sake of low cost and a roadmap to accessible healthy food for all. 'Neoliberal diet' (Otero, Pechlaner & Gürcan, 2014) conceptualization which arose from the neoliberal corporate food regime, for instance, captures the highly processed, energy-dense food-like products devoid of nutritional value that now take up most of our diets, is directly linked to the capitalist

growth imperative central to the agrifood system. The neoliberal diet is closely associated with obesity and other health problems. A degrowing agrifood system will also potentially offer healthier diets with local agricultural production without any GMOs and external inputs. In addition, as much as this thesis aimed to bring the Global South into the debates within the degrowth literature, future research on prevalent issues of the Global South such as care, gender, race, and policy options is needed and would be beneficial for the degrowth's established nexus between theory and activism. Lastly, in-depth theorization on alternative transition scenarios should be present in future research. It is rather more explicit how a degrowth society will look, yet how a global transformation will be triggered and the transition from capitalist to degrowing societal organization will take place remains ambiguous.

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THE AGRARIAN QUESTION, DEGROWTH AND THE GLOBAL SOUTH

By Hande Süzer

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Tore Fougner

Advisor

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Samuel J. Hirst

Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

Zehra Taşdemir Yaşın

Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

Refet Soykan Gürkaynak

Director