

Midwest Social Sciences Journal

Volume 26
Issue 2 *Emerging Themes and Perspectives in
the Social Sciences*

Article 1

8-1-2024

Volume 26, Issue 2 (Special Issue) – Full Contents

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Recommended Citation

(2024) "Volume 26, Issue 2 (Special Issue) – Full Contents," *Midwest Social Sciences Journal*: Vol. 26: Iss. 2, Article 1.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22543/2766-0796.1153>

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Volume 26, Issue 2



Midwest Social Sciences Journal

Special Issue

Guest Editor: Rajiv Thakur, Ph.D.
Co-Editor: Nirupama Devaraj, Ph.D.

A Publication of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences

ISSN 2766-0796

MIDWEST SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL

Volume 26, Issue 2

<https://scholar.valpo.edu/mssj/>

Anthropology • Business • Criminology • Economics • History
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Objectives of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences

The objectives of the Academy shall be to facilitate a more effective cooperation among social scientists, to promote the interests of the several social sciences, and to increase the usefulness and advance the effectiveness of both teaching and research in the several social sciences in Indiana.

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FOUNDED 1929 - INCORPORATED 1937

Established in 1929 and incorporated in 1937, the Academy exists to foster communication and collaboration among social scientists across the public and private colleges and universities of Indiana. The Academy is dedicated to the objectives of supporting social science research and dialogue and to promoting the value and visibility of the social sciences in Indiana while providing an environment in which social scientists across the state can interact in cooperation and friendship. The Academy holds an annual meeting and produces *Endnotes* (IASS newsletter) and publishes the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal*. The Academy currently recognizes all areas of scholarship that utilize social science perspectives and methods.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

This special issue of the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* (MSSJ) commemorates 75 years and more of the journal and its legacy as a repository of high-quality social science research and scholarly interaction amongst social scientists from across the state of Indiana and beyond. The MSSJ is an open access journal of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences (IASS).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JOURNAL

The IASS was established in 1929, and at its meeting at Spring Mill State Park in 1946, an anonymous gift allowed for the publication of six of the papers presented at the meeting, with the number of presentations increasing to 11 and 12 in 1947 and 1948, respectively (Tobin 2014). The publication, titled *Proceedings*, expanded its reach across the state, and by the late 1950s, it “became standard practice to send copies of the *Proceedings* to libraries of all institutions of higher learning in Indiana and to all high schools in towns of more than 10,000 in population” (Tobin 2014:119–20). When consistent funding support from academic institutions for the *Proceedings* became a possibility, the IASS officers and directors worked to develop a cohesive editorial policy, including creating submission guidelines, soliciting submissions from conference participants, and creating a fact-checking process (Tobin 2014). The practice of publishing conference proceedings continued until 1997, at which point the title of the *Proceedings* was changed to the *Journal of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences*. This change was intended to “strengthen the publication, raising its status and the quality of articles accepted” and “to serve as a clearing house for research in the social sciences in Indiana” (Tobin 2014:124–25). Beginning in 2010, senior editor and Butler University sociologist Kenneth Colburn implemented a double-blind process of peer review that encouraged submissions from authors who had not presented at the annual conference. Following this, the journal also became an online publication, hosted on the Digital Commons, in keeping with the technological needs of the time and also to expand the geographical reach of the journal. Furthermore, in 2019, the journal underwent a second name change to be called the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal*. This title change was reflective of the “fact that the journal’s non-Indiana authors, topics, and readership have grown considerably and frequently reflect a regional, Midwestern focus” and to continue to maintain the “ ‘Hoosier’ outlook and interest in Indiana” and also “to publish even more social science research that addresses regional, national, and international contexts and perspectives” (Colburn 2019:124–25).

The journal’s editors have been drawn from diverse institutional and diverse backgrounds (Tobin 2014:122), and all have striven to publish only the best research. Volumes 22–26 of the MSSJ received more than one hundred manuscript submissions, and the double-blind peer-review process was implemented with the assistance of regional, national, and, in some cases, international reviewers (Devaraj and Babu 2023), reflecting its geographical outreach. The MSSJ remains one of the few places where one can find

high-quality research from across the social sciences in one location, and this is reflected in the international scope of its readership (Bepress n.d.). Moreover, the interdisciplinary commitment of the journal serves to fulfil the potential of the social sciences to provide deep knowledge and understanding of our society (Colburn 2019:vi).

SPECIAL ISSUE GUEST EDITOR

The guest editor for this special commemorative issue is **Dr. Rajiv Thakur**. The broad scope and interdisciplinary nature of Professor Thakur's work made him a natural fit for this role and for the Journal. Dr. Thakur is an AAAS (American Association for the Advancement of Science) Science and Technology Policy Fellow at the U.S. Department of State's Office of the Science and Technology Adviser. During his first-year fellowship (2022–23), he worked at USAID's Input Systems Division in the Center for Agriculture-Led Growth, of the Bureau for Resilience and Food Security. He is currently on sabbatical from Missouri State University, where he is a professor of geography specializing in economic geography. His research and program interest resides at the intersection of international development, science and technology policy, and innovations from an interdisciplinary perspective.

At USAID, Dr. Thakur contributed to the innovations team, focusing on technology transfer through data collection and network mapping. In his second year at the Department of State, his portfolio includes multilateral diplomacy, innovation ecosystems, scientific integrity policy, and STEM ecosystems. He has coauthored books and held various leadership roles, including Faculty Senate Chair at Missouri State University and advisory roles with national panels such as the Boren Award and the Gilman Scholarship Program of the U.S. State Department. Dr. Thakur obtained a master's degree in geography from the University of Akron, his doctoral degree in economic geography from Indiana State University, and a master's degree in political science from the University of Delhi.

SPECIAL ISSUE

This volume brings together papers from eminent national and international scholars in cultural anthropology, social justice, urban development, and postcolonial politics. These papers undertake to tackle the complexity of contemporary social problems using innovative methodologies and analytical tools.

GRATITUDE

As always, I am grateful to our copy editor, Stephanie Seifert Stringham, and our publishing advisor, Jonathan Bull, for their continued support in bringing out the MSSJ. I also thank Gregg Johnson, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences of Valparaiso University, for his support of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences, and Trisha Mileham, Dean of the Library at Valparaiso University, for her support for hosting the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* on ValpoScholar.

INCOMING EDITOR

My current term as editor of the MSSJ expired in October 2023, and I was fortunate to be involved in bringing out this special issue. The next volume of the MSSJ, volume 27, will be published by our new editor in chief, Dr. Surekha Rao. Dr. Rao served as deputy editor of the *Journal of the Indiana Academy of Social Sciences* and is a past president of the Indiana Academy of Social Sciences. I am confident that the MSSJ will continue to thrive as a repository of high-quality social science research under her editorial guidance.

Nirupama Devaraj
Valparaiso University
July 2024

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GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE

In focusing on **Emerging Themes and Perspectives in the Social Sciences**, the 75th anniversary issue of the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* brings interconnected themes from diverse perspectives within the social sciences and compels us to rethink the change we are undergoing as a community in diverse geographic locations, exposing us to the challenges of our socioeconomic systems and creating an environment encouraging creativity and innovation.

This special issue comprises contributions from anthropologists, critical human and economic geographers, political scientists, and urban policy practitioners who raise several compelling issues around the narrative of common good, displacement and social justice, progress and regional inequalities, challenges experienced by women and femmes, emerging complexities in economic development among legacy cities of the midwestern United States, and the effects of climate change on human needs in the world's largest democracy. The emphasis is not on technology, which is constantly changing, but on the circumstances that affect the way technological solutions are realized.

In the first article, Manindra Nath Thakur examines the rising tension between capitalism and democracy indicating that today's so-called liberal capitalism has abandoned the principle of common good and its associated unlimited freedom of choice. Thakur asserts that the liberal capitalist order has met its demise and has been replaced with the rise of the techno-authoritarian state. If anything, liberal capital institutions have in the past few decades displayed a deeper systemic crisis of capitalism itself. Readers will find this article stimulating and its suggested consequences reverberating throughout the narrative of this special issue.

The second article, by M. Satish Kumar, addresses the dynamics of "progress" as experienced in both the colonial and postcolonial worlds with profound material consequences for the future of people, regions, and spaces. One finds common denominators between Kumar's arguments and Manindra Nath Thakur's narrative of liberal capitalism and inequalities as they came to be deeply entrenched in postcolonial worlds. As Kumar deconstructs progress between the colonial and postcolonial, he also reminds us why space matters and that we continue to live in a highly unequal world that is becoming more, rather than less, unequal.

The third article, by Tara Fitzgerald and Brij Maharaj, highlights the interrelated themes of displacement, social justice, urban rights, resettlement, and impoverishment which are often the product of neoliberal assault that Thakur refers to in his narrative. Fitzgerald and Maharaj review and reflect on these themes from the perspectives of urban rights in the context of 21st-century urban transformations, looking critically through the pioneering works of Henri Lefebvre's "Right to the City" and David Harvey's *Social Justice and the City*.

The next article's focus is the narrative of long-term structural economic changes altering the landscape of economic development of select midwestern states in the United States. Neil Reid, Sujata Shetty, and Jane Adade discuss the emerging challenges and opportunities in legacy cities as communities experience population loss and overall

economic decline. This article makes for an interesting read as it articulates the strategies that are being employed by affected communities to build resilience.

In the next article, Jagan Shah takes a practitioner's perspective on the challenges that governments face in the world's largest democracy as climate risks and the imperatives of planning, financing, and managing climate transitions have forced us to rethink capacity building. Using a scenario-building methodology as well as personal experiences, Shah unveils the crisis in the context of India, highlighting the underestimation of scale and complexity of adaptive capacity needed. This article will make for wholesome reading as it connects the dots between adaptation, capacity building, and management of infrastructure and displays the gaps in the context of India.

The last article in this special issue is very befitting in terms of its content, as it resides at the intersection of some critical conversations in social sciences, such as marginalization, privilege and access in anthropological research, Black diasporic feminist thought, and systemic forms of discrimination within the academy. Meryleen Mena wears multiple hats which define her positionality as a researcher, and she thus does justice to the spaces of knowledge exchange as she reminds us that a researcher's social, cultural, and subject positions affect the questions they ask and how they frame them, the issues they are drawn to, and how they contribute to the narrative.

The editorial team at MSSJ thanks the contributors of the articles of this special issue for their hard work in preparation of dedicated articles. Each one of them is an accomplished expert who has gone above and beyond in writing for this special issue reinforcing the interconnected nature of the topics they dealing with within social sciences. We hope you will find that this special issue raises some significant issues and questions even as we navigate challenging times for the social sciences in diverse geographies.

We are grateful to our copy editor, Stephanie Stringham, and our publishing advisor, Jonathan Bull, for their diligence and untiring support. Lastly, we thank Gregg Johnson, Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, for his support of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences, and Trisha Mileham, Dean of the Library at Valparaiso University, for her support for hosting the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* on ValpoScholar.

Rajiv Thakur
Professor of Geography and AAAS S&T Policy Fellow
Guest Editor

MISSION AND EDITORIAL POLICY

The purpose of the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal* is to promote and advance the social sciences in Indiana by publishing the highest quality social science theory and research papers available. MSSJ recognizes and supports the many diverse perspectives and methods across the several social sciences; it neither espouses nor champions any specific ideological, theoretical, methodological, or political commitments.

MSSJ is committed to intellectual integrity, rigorous standards of scholarship, and rational and civil discourse. It encourages the presentation and free exchange of diverse viewpoints and seeks to foster open and critical inquiry that privileges no particular standpoint while operating within the limits of a standard of discourse and reason that distinguishes between the pursuit of knowledge and truth versus mere assertions of dogma.

Although every effort will be made to publish issues that represent a fair balance of scholarship across the entire spectrum of social science disciplines, the journal's first priority will always be to publish the best social science research available at any given time, regardless of disciplinary representation. Toward this end, papers will be accepted for editorial review and publication in the annual issue of the journal at any time of year, whether or not they were presented at the Annual Conference. Persons who submit articles for review are expected to adhere to Author Submission Guidelines detailed elsewhere in this journal and online at <https://scholar.valpo.edu/mssj/>.

The journal was published annually both in print and online in the autumn from Volume 14 to Volume 19. Beginning with Volume 20, the journal is available only digitally. Papers submitted for possible publication are subject to a double-blind review process using Bepress. The editor alone is responsible for making the final decision on all manuscripts and content for publication in the journal. Their decision on publication content is not subject to review by any other member, officer, or body of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences.

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The Decline of Republican Democracy and Rise of the Techno-authoritarian State: Reading Dystopian Novels in Hindi Literature

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Jawaharlal Nehru University

ABSTRACT

In the past few decades, the nature of capitalism has changed fast as it has lost its philosophical justification based on the principle of the common good. There have been many avatars of the idea of the “common good”: “white man’s burden to civilize the world,” “welfarism,” and “neoliberal concept of freedom of choice.” Capitalism now seems to have moved in a new direction, however, and it has failed to produce any further philosophical justification for its existence as a mode of production despite generating unprecedented economic inequality. Consequently, there is a rising tension between capitalism and democracy in societies governed by liberal democratic principles. Indications are clear that if the need arises, capitalism would abandon democracy in the name of development and security. Two things are happening simultaneously that not merely confirm this process but also support it vehemently. For one, the nature of the state is changing, becoming more and more authoritarian to smoothen this process of divorce between democracy and capitalism. Moreover, the emerging authoritarian state is supported by the technologies of social control. In the future, one can guess, these societies might witness a painful unfolding of this “techno-authoritarian state.”

Second, the promises of democracy explicitly discussed by the founding fathers of this mode of organizing society, in either capitalist or postcolonial societies, have been heavily compromised. Aside from being abandoned by the state, these principles are undermined by the “we the people” who gave themselves constitutions to govern such societies. Unfortunately, people did not recognize the gradual erasure of republican principles as the regime promised liberal democracy with unlimited freedom of choice. It reduced democracy from the model of organizing society based on liberty, equality, justice, and fraternity with delicate balance among them to a model of majoritarian governance with fractured social relationships. Instead of social sciences, literary writings could probably capture these emerging trends better. In this paper, I explore whether the rise of dystopian literature in

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various languages gives sufficient indications towards this emerging trend of the rise of “techno-authoritarian states” and the decline of republicanism.

KEY WORDS Authoritarianism; Capitalism; Democracy

It is essential to understand our world, as we need an appropriate comprehension of it to explain things happening around us and to try to change them. Understanding the contemporary world is knowing the existing situation and capturing the unfolding dynamics of reality. A good model of such an exercise can be seen in the book *Secondhand Time* (2016) by Svetlana Alexievich, Nobel laureate from Russia. This book is about the transition in the Soviet Union that pulled the mammoth communist state down to present-day Russia. This transition did not take place in a day, yet social scientists from all over the world, including those from the Soviet Union, were not able to foresee the future. To make sense of the changing reality, instead of adopting standard social science methods, Alexievich picked up a project to collect people’s perceptions of what was happening; she collected thousands of testimonials. Interestingly, these micro-stories finally presented a macro picture of what was otherwise not so visible.

This paper suggests that such emerging trends exist at three levels: real, actual, and empirical. The real is the generative mechanism of the actual, and the empirical consists of the episodes and events at the surface level. What we generally observe is empirical and thus draws a picture of the phenomenon observed. This is the first-order explanation, which looks like an explanation but is merely a narration of the events. We attempt to decipher the actual by connecting the observed events empirically. This is the second order of reason, and it gives some understanding of the current moment, but it needs to give us a clue about the long-term trends. Finally, we explore the deeper layer by connecting the empirical and actual with structural logic, which provides us an understanding of the real. The understanding of the real allows us to capture emerging trends. The methodological debates in social sciences revolve around the possibilities of reaching the third level. In short, how do we comprehend the structural logic of the real and connect that with the actual and empirical?

This paper suggests that literature has the potential to capture the real by connecting with and transcending the empirical and actual. This is one of the points, which is methodological, that I am interested in making in this paper. This paper demonstrates that the popularity of dystopian literature reveals something unique emerging at the social and political levels, which the social scientists have missed: viz, the rise of a techno-authoritarian state. I argue that this process started early in India and culminated in the rise of majoritarian democracy and techno-authoritarian states. This has been relatively well indicated by some of the literary texts in India. These texts give us resources to comprehend the micropolitical processes contributing to this macropolitical transformation.

This paper is based on the reading of three Hindi novels: Priyamvad’s *Ve Vahan Kaid Hain* (They Are Imprisoned There, 1994), Mannu Bhandari’s *Mahabhoj* (The Grand Feast, 1979), and Purushottam Agarwal’s *NACOHUS* (National Commission for Hurt Sentiments, 2016). I think these novels have beautifully captured the process of the decline

of democratic institutions and related political processes in society. They indicate clearly that this crisis is a consequence and cause of the gradual emergence of majoritarian democracy and the techno-authoritarian state. I will argue that reading these texts can help social science answer several important questions: Is the nature of the state changing? Are we witnessing the rise of a new form of state? Is democracy in crisis? Will the new state dump democracy and adopt a more authoritarian character? These questions are discussed here in the Indian context, though they are globally relevant.

LITERATURE AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

As I mentioned, to capture the emerging trends in the overall social scenario, we need to transcend the boundary of social sciences and particularly access literary texts. Why do I say this? The production of literature gives enough freedom to the creative writer to speculate and write about things that do not fall within the purview of social sciences. Literature has a better capacity to capture the web of relationships, which allows it to operate simultaneously with several variables, producing the ontological complexity of social reality. It can connect the empirical level of human behavior with the actual level of economic, political, social, and psychological factors. It can also link all of this to the structural level of reality, which works as a generative mechanism for the actual and empirical levels.

Moreover, literature provides space for engagement with esoteric aspects of personal and collective consciousness; it can access the archaeology of collective consciousness and dreams of individual actors, which gives exciting clues for interpreting and explaining the phenomenal world. I am not saying that literature can replace social sciences. Instead, I am arguing for a deeper dialogue between the two, and I would like to suggest that such an engagement would enrich both. This might help us articulate creative literary critique and contribute to the methodological innovation for creative social research. I think it is desirable “to use the tools of social science in combination with those of speculative fiction to explore the space of possibilities in which our future political conflicts might play out” (Fraser 2016). Peter Fraser rightly suggests that we should think of a new genre of writing titles as “social science fiction” (Fraser 2016). He differentiates between social science and science fiction: “The first is about describing the world that is, while the second speculates about the world that might be,” although “both are a mixture of imagination and empirical investigation, put together in different ways” and “attempt to understand empirical facts and lived experience as something that is shaped by abstract—and not directly perceptible—structural forces” (Fraser 2016). The point to be noted is that there is an element of imagination in fiction. We cannot deny that such imaginations are not all fictitious, however. Instead, they are based on our lived experience. This element of experiential epistemology helps us capture the aspect of reality which is missed by the theory-oriented epistemology of social sciences. Since it is speculative, one must appreciate that we can talk only about future possibilities. Let me reiterate the point I am making here: Social science will be at great advantage if it engages with literature in terms of its capacity to capture the emerging trends in society.

In this article, I will use three dystopian novels to construct my argument regarding the “rise of techno-authoritarian state” and “decline of republican democracy.” My decision to read dystopian novels for this purpose is not arbitrary. I have conducted a Google search for best-selling novels for a couple of decades. I discovered not only that the production of such novels has gone up but also that their readership has increased manifold. One can claim this about the English-speaking world, as my survey is limited to English, either written in this language or translated into it. I have discovered that the translation of literature from other European, Latin American, and Japanese languages is faster than most Asian and African languages. I am convinced about the rising popularity of dystopian literature in the English-speaking world, and I find a good reason to glance at this genre to explore people’s moods. I am not sure if this is the case with Hindi literature. There is a gap in literature and society, as I am told by many publishers that there is a decline in sales from the counter. Publishers depend on government and library purchases, which does not reflect the popular sentiment towards any particular genre of literature. There is no list of the best sellers released by any literary society available online, as is regularly done in the case of English literature; however, I have selected three novels that I think could be put under the dystopian literature category and are considered necessary by the literary circle. I want to read them for my purpose of capturing the micropolitical process.

ONTOLOGY OF CONTEMPORARY, OR “ONTIC MUTATION”

How do we understand our time? In which direction are we moving? There is a need for drawing a mega picture of the future by capturing trends. As I have mentioned above, we need to connect three layers—empirical, actual, and real—to understand and explain the transition we are witnessing today. One must acknowledge the nature of this changing time and address whether this is normal or extraordinary, as the transition is fundamental. We need to ask if we are witnessing an ontic mutation; we will never be able to return to the old system, as it is not merely adjusting or correcting the system but its fundamental mutation into a new system. The symptoms of this newly emerging system are visible but have yet to finally crystalize to the extent of being visible to the naked eye. We must make efforts to capture it. We need to guess it. Still, we can talk only in terms of strong and weak possibilities. This change has four visible symptoms. We must remember that they are merely symptoms, and there is a need to explore the reasons behind these symptoms. The four symptoms are the transformation of capitalism, technology and automation, climate crisis, and authoritarian politics. These symptoms are mutually causally interconnected and, at times, explanatory to each other.

The most remarkable change is visible in capitalism today. Capitalism is moving in an entirely new direction. The history of capitalism suggests that there have been ruptures in its philosophical basis to accommodate the transformations in its nature after every severe economic crisis. The core idea projected as one of the outstanding achievements of this production and distribution system was that it would enhance the “common good”—in other words, the institution of private property and market would allow more production and equitable distribution of resources. This was claimed to be the core idea that guided reform in capitalism several times. The first time it expanded in the non-European world,

it was interpreted as the “white man’s burden” to civilize the world; the second time, it gave the model of welfare economics; and the third time, it formulated neoliberal policies claiming that freedom is the most fundamental common good. All these claims are contested and more ideological than real; however, capitalism has become completely faceless since the last major crisis in 2008; it has not been able to produce any sustainable ideological claim that could be considered a new interpretation of the old claim of being supportive of the common good.

Consequently, several scholars argue that we are moving towards a new postcapitalist era. The debate of postcapitalism has yet to crystalize, but it has abandoned any claim of the common good. Some scholars argue that capitalism has no option but to return to its welfare mode; otherwise, it would not be able to sustain itself. However, the social and labor movements need to be more robust to pressure capital and the state to come to terms and return to welfarism as public policy. There was some initial hope from the Occupy Wall Street movement, but the initial enthusiasm has been lost. It is easy to see that in resolving the contemporary crisis, capital wants to depend on something other than human labor; instead, it hopes the recent technology supported by artificial intelligence and robotics will do the job. Moreover, there is hardly any from below, as neither the labor movement nor student protests seem to care about the “techno-slavery” age awaiting us, where machines will denote and even dictate newer structures and newer societal infrastructure systems under the control of a few ruling brains.

Global capitalism was already facing a severe downtrend, and the COVID-19 crisis has added to that downtrend in a big way. Production and the market were paralyzed for almost six months yet have returned to normal. Consequently, there is a vast GDP fall in all countries. The rise of unemployment was already expected because of the automation of industries, but this crisis has further accelerated the process and provided legitimacy for it. Unemployment was supposed to grow gradually, and according to some estimates in the United States, it might reach remarkably high levels in the next few decades. One of the impacts of COVID-19 was the sudden rise in unemployment, and that without any labor protest. In other countries, one can find comparable statistics. One cannot deny the possibility of replacing labor power with technology. If this happens, these economies will face sustained unemployment. If such a crisis continues, social scientists need to ponder the consequences of this on the nature of the state.

In another paper (Thakur 2020), I argued that this transformation is beyond usual change and instead could be termed an ontic mutation (Thakur 2020). I have called it mutation, as these changes are fundamental and irreversible in the future. This is beautifully captured in *NACOHUS* when one of the characters declares, “In fact, the world in which we were habitual to living has changed forever, and it has not altered suddenly but gradually” (Agarwal 2016:64). The novel suggests that we live in a new historical phase, “NACOHUS Time,” as the organization’s officer tells the protagonist, “Suket sir, you do not understand the point. Well, we are taking you only to explain it. . . . To tell you the truth, sir, you have entered the NACOHUS era. Now TV will always accompany you and we will too . . . rest, you are an intelligent man yourself” (Agarwal 2016:48). This ontic mutation has occurred more than once in every society; it is not new. Till now, we have been thinking of such changes in the progress of human civilization, but this time, we are

witnessing regression, a reverse of whatever human beings have achieved through their struggle in the past few decades. Some examples of literary writings have captured such moments of ontic mutation in other cases. For instance, Michel Houellebecq, a French writer from whom I have taken this concept, has mentioned the fundamental change in the human body that is to come because of genetic engineering, and he thinks this would fundamentally transform the nature of social reactions. In the dystopian novel *Atomised* (also known as *Elementary Particles*, 2001), Houellebecq documented the climax of culture produced by high individualism prevalent in one section of French society. The protagonist is a genome scientist who witnesses the philosophical decline of society, where human beings become so atomized that they start searching for the meaning of existence only in their sexual being without having any link between body and mind. Houellebecq further suggests that with the innovations in genome editing, further mutations would fundamentally differ from any other earlier forms of society. Similarly, Svetlana Alexievich, in her book *Secondhand Time: The Last of the Soviets* (2016)¹, has reported that the change from the Soviet Union to Russia was a kind of ontic mutation, which was hardly recognized by most people.

I want to emphasize that literary writers have mostly recognized such ontic mutations. I think one of the reasons for this is their proximity to the real world and the form of writing that tries to capture a narrative emerging from this real situation. If we agree with this, we need to acknowledge that the transition that dystopian literature suggests cannot be all imaginary. I will further discuss the essential signs of majoritarian democracy and authoritarianism captured by the writers I will discuss in this paper.

DEMOCRACY, CAPITALISM, AND IDENTITY

Let us discuss the political consequences of the economic crisis in the times to come. The neoliberal phase of capitalism had already infused an element of populism in politics. Since the policies under this regime were pro-market, the welfare schemes introduced to support the ordinary people started gradually shrinking. The introduction of the market in the essential aspects of life like health and education reduced the real income of the ordinary people as they began to pay for these crucial services that they used to get free during the welfarist regime. Moreover, exposure to the market and the infusion of an immense desire to consume created a disbalance in people's lives. There was a paradigm shift in the state's approach to inequality, employment, and natural resources. Instead of attempting to give productive assets to the marginalized people, states have started adopting the programs under the larger frame of a "security net" provided by the World Bank. Under the "security net programs," projects were created to dole out some financial support to the people. Abandoning the commitment to education and healthcare made people more vulnerable, and the so-called security net, instead of providing them sustainable security, pushed them into the market network. This temporarily enhanced some people's income; however, it served the interest of the capital, as it expanded the market into newer areas and more people got incorporated. One typical symptom of this is the availability of costly chewable items or eatable things, oil, and shampoos in smaller pouches costing one or two rupees

that penetrated the rural market. This disturbed the food basket of ordinary people and pushed them into further health deprivation.

In the past few years, the new regimes have withdrawn the so-called safety nets, exposing a massive population to a severe precarity. These regimes are using populism as a strategy to assure people of specific support, which comes but only for a smaller number and serves the purpose of the government as it creates a false hope among a vast number of people. This is also true of other promises, like employment, by providing capital, education by training, healthcare by insurance, doubling farmers' incomes, etc. These promises are never to be delivered, as delivery is not on their agenda and they do not have capacity, so, finally, nothing happens, and the situation moves from bad to worse.

The first phase of the neoliberal regime became highly unpopular because of the economic policies that benefited capital but delivered only promises to the people. Unfortunately, because of the lack of any formidable movements by workers or farmers or by marginalized people, left parties could not take advantage of this situation. There was a general decline in the legitimacy of the left parties due to the collapse of the existing socialist systems, but the larger trap was the rise of identity politics in every country. Capital promoted identity politics to contain any consolidation of masses against the neoliberal ideology. This is not to suggest that identity politics was a conspiracy of capital, but it allowed capital to avert any formidable popular upsurge against the system.

Let us try to unpack the politics of identity to understand the connection between capital and democracy in contemporary times. It is essential to realize that there are stages of identity politics. The stage theory of identity politics will help us explain the universal presence of identity across time and space but the eminence of it only in specific contexts. Identity Identification is the first stage, in which we feel closer to someone as we have some common experience to share based on caste, culture, language, religion, nation, and so on. This affinity is natural, as such shared experiences create common ground for communication, and recalling such experiences gives us immense pleasure. These shared experiences also help us construct communities, primarily with fuzzy boundaries. We therefore love participating in parties or clubs based on these common grounds. This stage of identity politics has hardly any political element and is more based on our primordial experiences. We develop an image, to use in Lacanian terms, towards the things we are missing and cannot return to that in real life, and we therefore create such occasions to recall these experiences. If things remain at this stage, one can hardly call it political in the typical sense of the term.²

The second stage, Identity Consolidation, begins when we try to give a more formal or informal institutional shape to the group identified by specific common markers. So, we give it a name and organize events to attract attention and not only for pleasure. At this stage, the boundaries of such groups remain porous and people without such markers are also welcome to participate. There is a mild effort to adopt specific dress or cultural symbols, and people start identifying the group with them. This stage is also not political in the typical sense, but political actors start approaching them as vote banks. Political leaders start addressing their concerns, occasionally using their symbols while addressing them as a group. The group's cultural programs become the center of attraction for the

political leaders, and, at best, such groups at this stage work more as an interest group or a pressure group.

By the time the group evolves to the third stage, Identity Politics, it becomes overtly political. The group starts formulating its ideology, which glorifies the golden phase of its history and highlights specific differences with others and assets at the political level. For further consolidation of the community that is created with the help of ideological interpellation, such groups identify their other and start demonizing the other as the enemy. History is read selectively, events are highlighted to celebrate the glorious past, heroes are rediscovered, and, finally, the identity group emerges as an active political actor, promising the return of the golden age.

In the fourth stage, the identity movement enters the Violent Conflict phase. At this stage, a sharp competition begins among the different voices within the group. Two processes begin simultaneously: one silencing the weaker internal voices and the other attacking the imagined enemies. Sometimes, an identity group inflicts violence outside to consolidate its position within the community. A militant core emerges in the group and tries to capture the central stage by demonstrating its power to fight against the enemy externally. Conflict becomes inevitable if the other such groups created are equally assertive. At this stage, identity politics hides internal contradictions and inflicts violence within as the groups develop canons for governing the community, and such canons are mostly quite restrictive.

What is also interesting about identity politics in a country with diverse intersections, such as with multitudes of linguistic, religious, cultural, and social hierarchies, is that to create a Great Identity, the group also silences and marginalizes various Small Identities based on their cultural, historical, intellectual, or social capital. It becomes the group's burden to civilize the marginalized ones into the structure the group believes to be appropriate. Symbols of the Great Identity are enforced on the Small Identities who might have experienced the same but differently. That space for "differently" is erased from the equation when the leadership dictates the heroes that will be acknowledged, the language that will be spoken, and the culture that will be celebrated more. The Great Identity creates pockets of power based on the same approach it claims to be fighting.

What is the link between capitalism, democracy, and identity? Identity politics plays a functional role until the third stage of development as mobilization for democratic participation is enhanced. Though it is antithetical to the politics of citizenship, as the modern state does not treat individuals as community members but promises to empower them with the rights supported by authority, such a functional role of identity politics deepens democracy. Increased participation based on community identity is therefore considered a "democratic upsurge." There is a need to unpack the idea of democratic upsurge, however, as it is not so innocent in terms of the culture it produces, which by no means strengthens the notion of democracy. It renders the concept of modern citizenship irrelevant. In moments of crisis in capitalism, identity-based politics allows the state to fragment the marginalized people so that any consolidation for protest can be defeated. In such situations, the state promotes the politics of identity by providing specific selective support to the competing identities, and mainstream politics is defined by this.

India is an excellent example of this process. With the introduction of neoliberal policies by the Indian state, community rights were emphasized. The introduction of caste-based reservation policies and privileging community assertions started simultaneously with the introduction of neoliberal policies by privileging the market over the state in the realm of economy. Identity politics played a significant role in allowing the Indian state to introduce antipeople economic reforms. As typically happens in the fourth phase of identity politics, the liberal voices within these communities were marginalized, and identity groups formed their own by being demonized, which they started consolidating themselves. This became the suspected enemy, and at times, the otherness became a source of internal and external violence. The irony is that the so-called democratic upsurge created a political culture antithetical to democracy. The universal principles of political arguments were sacrificed to the assertion of the one guided by community interest. The relativist argument is based on cultural logic without asserting any universal principle of justice.

Consequently, instead of asserting that nothing universal is final and that new facts have to be accommodated whenever they come to light, we accept a relativist argument based on the interests of the powerful identity group. Sacrifice of the possibility of any universal principle of justice creates fertile ground for what we have started calling the post-truth era. The rise of new populism based on religious identity is a logical extension of identity politics asserted by the smaller communities. In India, it is popularly known as the Mandal–Kamandal phase of politics.³ There is no doubt that the caste system is antithetical to democracy, as it produces not only hierarchy but also humiliation, and there are issues of recognition and redistribution linked with discrimination based on it. We have to accept that the Indian democracy has to fight against such a system; however, the method of resolving this issue privileged the reassertion of caste as a community, and in this process, the other forms of discrimination were utterly undermined. This served the purpose of the capitalist state, as it reduced class assertion and even recognized increasing class discrimination. There was no formidable opposition from caste-based politics against neoliberal policies. The neoliberal policies were implemented unopposed during the dominance of the regimes supporting social justice based on the Mandal politics in India.

For quite some time, even the left parties were standing in support of caste-based identity politics as they feared the rise of communal politics of the majority community championed by a set of political parties. Unfortunately, as I have argued above, the option between Mandal and Kamandal was hardly an option, as one paved the path for the other. The logic has shifted a little, and now the idea of victimhood has shifted from caste-based discrimination to the narratives of religion-based humiliation. India is a fertile ground for long-term identity politics based on religious ideology, as it has a history of intercommunity distrust and conflict. The history of Hindu–Muslim relations has been full of contradictions and cooperation; however, the politics of identity selectively uses memory to highlight the atrocities done by the Muslim rulers and uses the global rise of Islamophobia to support the fear of the majority community. The shift from Mandal to Kamandal politics was not difficult, as it needed only a similar narrative of victimhood.

Once one form of identity politics is exhausted because of loss of legitimacy and capacity to create a more significant bloc, as the benefit of such politics is limited to the dominant partner, the other form is projected as a central contradiction. There is much

difference between identity politics based on caste discrimination and victimhood on religious grounds. In the former case, the structures of domination still exist and such politics played a liberative role to a great extent. In contrast, in the latter case, the dominant community has gained a lot in the post-independence development process. One cannot deny that there is a logical and organizational similarity between the two, however. Both undermine the logic of democratic culture despite increasing popular participation in politics.

An excellent example of this decline of the culture of democracy is found in *Chhadan*, a Hindi novel by Surendra Snigdh. This is a story of the region north of Bihar that has witnessed displacement and crisis due to massive floods and the changing course of the Kosi River. The novel begins with Gandhi's quick tour of this region in 1925 and covers the period marked by identity politics towards the end of the twentieth century. The writer chooses to narrate a story of this period precisely to show the change in the political culture of this region, which is marked by a movement from the value-based politics of Gandhian time to identity-based politics in which universal principles are lost. One good example to demonstrate this is the character of a famous communist leader who belonged to a lower caste but always based his politics on the universal principles of justice (Snigdh 2007). I have hardly found any social science writing taking cognizance of this point, apart from providing a good analysis of the decline of democratic culture and the poverty partisan sole of the modern liberal state at the grassroots level.

Let me elaborate on this point with the help of the novels I have chosen to discuss in this article. *Mahabhoj*, authored by Mannu Bhandari, gives a picture of the declining democracy in the 1970s. The leaders in this novel still, at least symbolically, claim to follow Gandhian ideals, and then the story exposes their hypocrisy and contribution to the distortion of democratic norms. Da Sahib, the main protagonist, is an ideal leader with deep links with the ideology and norms of the first generation of postindependent Indian leadership. Still, as the story moves, his personality is exposed. He gets involved in subtle forms of conspiracies and manipulations. Mannu Bhandari beautifully shows the difference between the form and content of his leadership:

Only two gigantic pictures of Gandhi and Nehru were hung on the wall in the name of decoration. Da Sahib considers them as his guides and inspirations. The teachings of Gita are supposed to be guiding principles of his life. You will find a copy of Gita in each corner of the house. By the way, he never gifted anything—he did not believe in meaningless pretence. However, someday, if he had to give something, he only used to give a copy of Gita. (Bhandari [1979] 2015:12)

Such a person manipulates the election process without hesitation. He operates through his men loaded with undemocratic values. Zorabar, one of the confidants of Da Sahib, sets the *Dalit* (downtrodden) *basti* on fire, in which several people are burnt along with their houses. Da Sahib goes against the principles of justice and protects him. Zorabar

kills the person who was trying to collect evidence of a heinous crime he has committed. Da Sahib protects him again. For this purpose, a plain and simple act of a crime by a musclemans is transformed into a spicy love triangle story. It was proved that the *Dalit* person killed was a lover of his friend's wife, who, in the garb of friendship, killed him. To give this new twist and change this narrative, Da Sahib had to favor the editor and the press owner by providing a permit for the paper, and the police officer in charge of this case got a promotion. Da Sahib announced a development scheme for the *Dalits*, and the new narrative of progress replaced the depressing story of the burning of the *Dalit basti* and the killing of the person struggling for justice. This is a story of managing things at "election time." The entire democratic process has been reduced to manipulation during election time, which has become more a subject of management than a system of representation. Da Sahib reads the newspaper with great satisfaction as it highlights his efforts to bring progress to his region. The anger and anxiety of the *Dalit* community found no space in the news. This was probably when newspapers were blamed for publishing paid news in India. The author satirically shows that Da Sahib finds it so satisfying as he thinks the editor has done an excellent job promoting "democratic values": "After reading each word of this page, Da Sahib's face lit up. The village of Bapu's (Gandhi's) dream had taken shape before his eyes, and his heart drowned in the satisfaction of doing something significant (Bhandari [1979] 2015:154)." This difference in the form and content of the leadership in the '70s is responsible for the decline of the republican democracy.

The novel also gives the other side of the picture seen through the eyes of the victim, Binda, a *Dalit* and a friend of Bisu, the person who was killed. The real story is that Zorawar, Da Sahib's trusted assistant, is the culprit, and Binda knows it well. He had with him the evidence that was collected by Bisu, for which Zorabar killed him. Through Binda, the novel speaks about the nature of the emerging democratic trends. Look at the Thana (local police station) depicted in the novel:

In the name of decoration, two calendars were hung on the wall—One of Shiva-Parvati and the other of Bharat Mata. On one side of Bharat Mata, Gandhiji is spinning his charkha (wheel), and Nehru is carrying the flag of India. The country always remembers Gandhi-Nehru, even for a second. You will see them seated in every corner, even if they are lifeless pictures only. (Bhandari [1979] 2015:112)

Photographs of Gandhi and Nehru, which are more symbolic than productive, are everywhere. They have become sources of state legitimacy and have lost all their meaning. There is hardly any moral impact on the officer in charge. All immoral things are done in their virtual presence, and they have become "lifeless pictures." The novel shows that the Thana is the state apparatus instrumental in transforming democracy into a political conspiracy. This coercive state apparatus implements the will of the dominant class, and it does so in a style that makes things look legitimate. The people at the margin know the reality of these Thanas quite well, however. Consider the following statement,

in which Binda angrily asks the senior police officer who is sent for inquiry as part of Da Sahib's plan:

Crime! Do you still recognise crime? Of major crimes, do you? You do not consider significant crimes as a crime. Burn people alive . . . kill them . . . all these are not crimes in your eyes? . . . Why is it called investigation? Say you are making everyone a fool! . . . Why fool around with the villagers for nothing? In chess, from Da Sahib's to yours, the pawn of Bisu's death has been fitting in today. That is why the investigation is happening so fast. . . . With so much affection, people are being called for their statements. But nothing will happen. . . what has happened to you people . . . none has any faith or dharma [ethics] left in him. . . . All will suffer damnation. (Bhandari [1979] 2015:122).

The man's vision from the margin is evident as he understands the conspiracy, follows the sequence of events, and knows the intricacies. The punch line that comes after this dialogue represents this understanding of Binda. The police officer warns him that he should remember it is Thana (police station) and not *Pagalkhana* (mental asylum). See how perceptively Binda replies: "Have you left any difference between the two? Whatever happens in the police station, do you even understand its head or tail?" (Bhandari [1979] 2015:122). *Pagalkhana* as a metaphor is the climax of the novel and the end of the journey of republican democracy after this so-called liberal neutrality of the state is completely exposed. The entire criminal justice process depends on the First Investigation Report prepared by the Thana. The novel exposes how the political class uses this institution to empty the content of republican democracy.

The process that started in the 1970s in India matured in the 1990s as the norms of democracy finally took the back seat. This decade witnessed the rise of majoritarianism based on religion. One response to the crisis of democracy was in the form of identity politics of the 1980s. The elite of Independent India constituted the upper caste. Once it lost the sense of justice as it compromised on the values of republican democracy, the discontent against it was consolidated in the form of identity politics based on the victimhood of the marginalized castes. It was emancipatory, as such an identity consolidation did give these groups a bargaining capacity in democracy; however, this consolidation and subsequent identity politics created a further crisis of republican values as even lip service to such principles was abandoned entirely. People stopped asking questions as this new normal became so much more acceptable. The earlier tokenism of the ideas of Gandhi and Nehru, which used to ignite some feelings of guilt in the minds of the political leaders, was entirely abandoned. Symbolically, the "Gandhi cap" became a rare thing to find as it lost its glory in this new world. *Khadi* (derived from *khaddar*, a hand-spun and woven natural-fiber cloth promoted by Mahatma Gandhi) was still popular among the politicians, but more as a symbol of a field of activity than any commitment to the republican values. The phase of the politics of social

justice empowered the marginalized to some extent, but beyond a point, it created a new elite devoid of republican values.

The further rise of majoritarianism has been documented well by Priyamvad in his small novel *Ve Vahan Kaid Hain*. Its context is the pre-Babri Mosque demolition, hence politics before the rise of Hindutva as the politically dominant force. This text reminds us that it is a mistake to see politics from above; instead, we need to capture the trends in people's everyday lives. Unfortunately, the academic elite debated the idea of secularism as state policy. Still, it could not develop any strategy to counter the political culture, preparing the ground for the rise of majoritarian democracy. One must acknowledge the process through which the idea of secularism was being deleted from the language of politics. The protagonist is a celebrated professor of history, and he is known for his liberal secular approach. His ideological commitment and personal behavior influence his students. The aura of his personality was good enough to communicate his excellent humanitarian values. Things were changing for him, however. He could feel the rise of a new ideology, questioning his relevance. The novel shows the micro process of this emerging ideology. One of the professor's students was influenced by communal ideology. The reasons for this influence were mixed. The new logic of majoritarianism was taking shape, in which religious ideology was combined with economic gains.

The followers of this new ideology were consolidating the identity and using the power of the majority to capture disputed properties. This was using the idea of victimhood to remind people of historical injustice and was producing a new kind of humiliation. Sukkhi Babu, one of the main protagonists of this novel, is the alter ego of the professor of history, another protagonist who represents the Nehruvian secular viewpoint. Sukkhi Babu rose from being a worker in a leather factory to being a prominent government contractor and wanted to seek his fortune in politics. Interestingly, communalism was a new business opportunity for him, as most of the materials used by the communal groups were prepared in his factory. Initially, he was sympathetic to the Muslim community, as he was saved by one of his Muslim coworkers, Shakeel, during the communal riot, and they became good friends. He helped Shakeel by giving him a big plot of land for running the scrap business. After some time, Shakeel left for Pakistan and handed over the business to his brother, who was a poet and interested in something other than running such a low-level activity. His son took the industry forward, and he was pro-Pakistan and deeply influenced by Islamic fundamentalism. Sukkhi's rising status as a politician, in which he was "investing" a lot, empowered him to think big. His business ambition and desire for power were intertwined with his ideological orientation. He could mobilize young people for his purpose, remove Shakeel's nephew from the prime plot suitable for a big marketing complex, and command much more respect than he deserved. The narrative is symbolic of Indian politics, in which the politics of identity benefits some people economically. Consider the following sequence of communal events:

When Masood came out of jail, he was shocked. A flag and a temple were in the yard, and at the gate, Guthli was sitting, . . . violently, staring at Masood's eyes. The people with him were also prepared. There were policemen all

around, for if Masood created a stir, he would again be broken and thrown in jail. The court was closed for two days. Nothing happened in courts except long fights these days, for ten–twenty years or till death. Masood had neither that much money nor time and patience. There was no question of the police speaking against Sukkhi Babu. On the other hand, when Sukkhi Babu calculated that night, he came to know that he had a fief worth two crores, so dreams of the biggest commercial complex of the city started to ooze in his eyes. (Priyamvad [1994] 2002:90)

Sukkhi Babu's communal politics was an investment in the true sense of the term. It gave him double dividends, as it enhanced his economic and political stature. His plan of striking in the city, getting Masood arrested, and setting up the business establishment on the land he rented out to his friend Shakeel, who had saved his life, worked well. Masood later killed Guthli, the young man involved in it, and ran into the house of the professor, who wanted to keep him from a Hindu mob out to lynch him. The mob invaded his house, insulted his daughter, and went on. It is a complex story of a small city, but a narrative with a tremendous possibility of explaining things happening nationally.

The so-called secular state allowed these things to happen in the above case. The next stage of the development is partly imaginary and partly real. Purushottam Agarwal's *NACOHUS* is a dystopian novel in the true sense of the term. It is about contemporary times marked by democracy under the majoritarian regime and the philosophical crisis of capitalism. The National Commission for Hurt Sentiments is a new institution created by the state to take care of the violent phase of identity politics. It suits the majoritarian state, as it provides an opportunity to deflect the real economic issues. The time depicted in this novel is "NACOHUS KAL," an extension of a national emergency when fundamental rights are suspended. Nevertheless, unlike emergency, it is a permanent situation, and apparently, the commission has been constituted on a popular demand.

The main protagonists are three history professors in an institute. They teach Indian culture and civilization. Their only crime is that they dare to be liberal and secular in their approach, and the state has defined it as a new kind of crime. They are accused of hurting the sentiments of the people. It is a bigger crime than anything else now. The novel is full of dream sequences, imageries, and symbolism. It begins with a set of symbolisms depicting the crisis of democracy. There is a temple with a Sufi Mazar that gave the lane its name, symbolizing our society's syncretic culture. But the novel's protagonist, Suket, feels the presence of a crocodile and an elephant in this lane; the former symbolizes the evil of identity politics, violence, and state authoritarianism, and the latter symbolizes democracy. The crocodile has seized the leg of the elephant, and the elephant is crying for help:

Elephants' bellows and shrieks are just going into the void.
Coming back, taking the form of waves of pain, it only
spreads in its body. It was neither heard by Narayan of

Baikunth Lok [Heaven], Gods of *Yamllok* [Hell], nor people of earth. Elephants have been famous in the tradition of strength and wisdom. After being saved by Narayan himself in the tales from Purana, he is believed to be the totem of the blessing of Bhagwat. At this moment, the agonising screams are taking his wisdom and grace of Narayan—the vanity of the three to ether. (Agarwal 2016:10)

This is an ancient symbolism of Indian mythology, and the novel transforms it into a modern context. The entire novel is a narrative of this crisis of dumping democracy by capitalism that we are facing today. In the divorce process between democracy and capitalism, the state uses identity politics to deflect widespread attention, so NACOHUS is a new instrument discovered for the state to control the thought process in society.

The institute is vandalizing the students as the three professors have written something that has at heart the sentiments of different identity groups: the Hindu cultural nationalists, the Islamic fundamentalists, and the social justice group. These three professors are not communists, but they may be put under the broad category of left liberals believing in their responsibility towards democracy, marginalized people, and antipatriarchal culture. Time is changing. People with such ideas were considered progressive elites, and many played a significant role in policymaking in the postcolonial world. But look at the adjectives being used for them by the new political groups:

“Come out, bastard!”

“See, I have arrived. If you want to, beat me, if you want . . . let’s talk! I am ready to debate about what is written.”

“Debate? . . . you pimp . . .”

“*Abey* [Hey], he neither has a wife nor sister or daughter; whose pimp will he be?”

“*Abey*, that chick that comes every day to his house.”

“The traitors of the nation . . . beat them with your shoes! You cannot play with national sentiments; you cannot.” (Agarwal 2016:11)

This is the kind of political culture that is emerging in the process of identity politics. The worst is that the intellectual community gets divided, and some begin thinking these issues are specific to the literature and social science disciplines as their modern science is above them; however, many consider these intellectuals Eurocentric and raise slogans: “The intellectuals should abandon the logic of the sheer European type . . . Eurocentric rationalism—Murdabad [down with; death to: used as part of a slogan in India]” (Agarwal 2016:16). The politics of identity has blurred the argumentative capacity of intellectuals, too; it has done some cognitive damage. They also start talking about hurt sentiments and break the norms of republican democracy by

disturbing the meeting: “What meeting . . . what dialogue . . . enough, fury dance of hurt feelings . . . what right do these bastard seculars have of hurting majoritarian sentiments . . . beat these bastards . . . mother . . . anti-nationals”(Agarwal 2016:20). This is amazing but not difficult to believe by now, as the new political culture is taking shape and it has become a new normal. The novel has captured the emerging trend of intellectuals losing their argumentative advantages. The divisive identity politics has not spared anyone; we have lost judgmental rationality.

This is a new world. The novel summarily puts it in a paragraph of the slogans written on the wall and keeps repeating to make us believe the ontic mutation:

That history must perish/that has curdled the brain, “burn the documents, erase them,” “down with memory, long live ignorance,” “screw up the memories/says NACOHUS in affection,” “whoever will remember will be beaten up,” “art is that which entertains,” “literature is that which gives joy,” “thinking is that which makes you conscious immediately,” “writing is that which can be understood immediately,” “wisdom is that which brings you NACOHUS.” (Agrawal 2016:63)

This is the new NACOHUS time, in which things, values, and norms have changed. This is all-pervasive, as the meaning of good literature, knowledge, enlightenment, and almost everything has changed. These slogans indicate declining republican democracy and the rise of majoritarian democracy. This change has happened in a few days. It has taken a long time, and in this process, many people have contributed to its evolution in their ways. What we are witnessing today is only a stage of this decline; we have probably yet to witness the worst form of it. In the next section, I will discuss the changing nature of the state.

STATE, TECHNOLOGY, AND AUTHORITARIANISM

How does the state respond to the ontic mutation indicated by the deepening philosophical crisis of capitalism, emerging majoritarian democracy based on the politics of identity, and declining judgmental rationality in society? We need to differentiate between the regime, or government, and the state. There is no doubt that much of the nature and function of the state depends on the ideological and social basis of the party in power; however, the state is a more continuous institutional and ideological arrangement. Overall, it plays the role of supporting the unfolding mode of production. Under all different regimes in India, the state has facilitated the growth of capitalism. It keeps acquiring different strategies depending on the demands of capital, and regimes are supposed to follow the dictates of the logic of the structure. One of the major concerns of the state is to formulate a long-term ideological support system to make the dominant mode of production spontaneously acceptable to the people.

The elected governments function within these structural limits of the state. In the past few years, it has become clear that the political parties oppose government policies when they are not in power but implement similar policies when they come to power. One can find ample examples of political leaders making contradictory statements on various issues when they are out of power and when they become part of the ruling regime. This only suggests that the state has a structural logic, and governments cannot evade it. The structural reasoning in today's case depends on the demands for governance generated by capital's support requirement to emerge from the recent economic depression. The Indian state will support the capital, making several antipeople policies. The state develops tools for ideological justification and coercive repression to mitigate the popular discount due to capital-centric policies. The more it is difficult to justify the state ideologically, the more the state will need to be coercive. In this process, the state continuously compromises with the principles of republican democracy and transforms it first into liberal democracy and then into majoritarian democracy. Finally, if democracy still hinders the implementation of policies needed to support capital, it will abandon democracy altogether and switch to an authoritarian regime.

I want to argue that the microprocesses of this change from republican democracy to authoritarianism can well be understood through dystopian literary texts. Because these texts capture these microprocesses in people's everyday lives, they have the potential to capture the symptoms quite early, much earlier than the social sciences do. One can find the transition in Indian democracy well documented in the literary texts. The police station of *Mahabhoj* was part of the coercive state apparatus and was working on behalf of the ruling elite. Da Sahib could manipulate the report on the burning of the *Dalit basti* and the killing of the *Dalit* activist only through the patronage of the police officers. The routine promotion and posting of allurements helped these elites use the coercive state apparatus to get desired results. In *Ve Vahan Kaid Hain*, the same police allowed the riot to happen and favored the local business class in fulfilling his selfish goal, and by now, the state patronage has been replaced by financial corruption. By the time we reach the *NACOHUS* level, the authoritarian nature of the state becomes more visible and special provisions are made to legally silence the opposition to the state policies.

In *NACOHUS* time, the state has formulated laws for using coercive means and has created enough confusion in society so that such actions could be justified in the name of hurt sentiments. There are enough reasons to hurt the feelings of all kinds of people. It could be hurt due to a statement on nation, caste, community, gender, and you can go on and on. The students vandalized the library of the institute, and the scholars were attacked by groups claiming to be nationalists or advocates of social justice. Intellectuals have started acknowledging the danger of hurting sentiments. It is widely accepted that one should not even write articles on sensitive issues and definitely should not write the truth, as truth just does not matter; it has become dangerous. Some of the protagonist's colleagues argue in favor of post-truth, as they consider truth culturally dependent. Moreover, this has become the new normal. Symbolically, in the busy corner of the city, which used to be an assurance for syncretic culture, people ignore the heartbreaking crying of the elephant. In a way, the novel warns the people that the authoritarian state is emerging and this expected

behavior is quite abnormal for a democracy. Consider this statement by the character Chauda Singh, who represents the psychology of claiming a 56" broad chest:

Every visionary who takes society on the path of development has had to treat intellectuals like you to put your intellectuality in place . . . see wherever you want to . . . Germany, Italy, Russia, China, Iran . . . it's the same story everywhere . . . [they] become intellectuals. . . . Never use their wisdom . . . intellectuality is to change with time. . . . Match the tune in the chorus of hurt sentiments . . . most people are improving so fast . . . but you are just. (Agarwal 2016:67)

This statement by the officer of the NACOHUS exposes the core of the emerging nature of the state and the purpose of coercion. The idea is not to solve the identity issues but to use them for the needed hegemonic acceptance of the model of development or progress.

One can compare it with the actions of the Delhi police after the communal riot in Delhi. Some noted intellectual activists were given notices and called to the police station for inquiry. None of them reported any misbehavior on the part of the police; however, the purpose of such actions was clear. Please read the following analysis of the event that appeared in the editorial of a noted national newspaper:

It matters little, too, whether the police are eventually able to find the evidence—it won't against individuals with as impeccable and distinguished credentials in public life as Yechury or Yadav. But in the meantime, it can unleash the due process as punishment. And send out a chilling signal, not just to Muslims, but to all those who speak for a more inclusive India, that they can speak freely and criticise the government openly, at their peril. (Editorial, *Indian Express*, September 14, 2016)

So, you have entered the NACOHUS KAL already. The officer has picked up the protagonist on the grounds of hurt sentiments, but the idea is to spread the message that opposition to state policies will not be accepted.

To support NACOHUS, a new kind of organization has been created. It is called BouNeSar (Boudhik Naitik Samaj Rakshak, or Intellectual Moral Social Security Guard), and the purpose is clear:

The thing is that it is not going to happen now that self-proclaimed intellectuals keep hurting the sentiments with their anti-social, anti-national, or, for that matter, anti-ideological activities, and society does nothing about it. . . .

Enough show of respect for intellectuals, now discipline is needed . . . so the Boudhik Naitik Samaj Rakshak . . . BuNeSar takes care of the fact that intellectuals like non-intellectuals know their place. . . . Talking nonsense about these Samaj Rakshaks is also a punishable and cognisable offence . . . by the way, it was you only who made this insulting comment a few days ago, Suket Sir. . . . Nowadays, buildings are getting higher, and humans are becoming tinier. (Agarwal 2016:120)

It is important to note that the technique of running an authoritarian state has improved a lot. Now, the state is quite conscious of building consensus. New ideological elements have been introduced. There is a tendency to convert a section of the population into an ideological tool for the coercive apparatus. It has moved from divide and rule to make the section of people a stakeholder in the process.

Technological innovations now support the new authoritarian regime. The more we are using technology, the more there is a possibility of being controlled by the state. We happily surrender to information technology, which gives us enough information about ourselves, and control of any activity becomes easy:

The government has decided—every citizen’s food and drink, cry and song, pooping-peeing will be in the eyes of the government . . . people started hoping, “corruption has gone, corruption has gone; just gone . . .” It was announced that CCTV cameras would be installed in every corner of the city, and people started singing words of encouragement, “This is how women should be protected . . .” The government announced fearlessly, “All email phones will remain under surveillance.” Knowledgeable people were overwhelmed and thought of terrorism as being swept away. (Agarwal 2016:37)

The sense of insecurity and then a sense of false security makes people surrender to the techno-authoritarian state. This is how the techno-authoritarian state works and manufactures the consent of the people. This is entirely a new situation. Though this was the same formula that Hitler used to win consent to brutally murder the Jews, what has taken it to the next level is the inclusion of technology. With instruments of “mass insecurity” like fake news and social media platforms, the propaganda spreads faster than a forest fire. The same instruments are also used to provide a sense of false security and to justify actions undertaken to produce that security.

The NACOHUS time is about the use of information technology as human beings are no more supposed to be *homo economicus* or *homo creatives*; instead, they have evolved into *homo informaticus* and are supposed to live in the jungle of concrete buildings, develop a forest of information, and entertain themselves in that beautiful park (Agarwal

2016:115). In this new time, there will be no value for art, culture, literature, philosophy, and history, as technology can replace everything. The intellectuals are supposed to be replaced by the *technectuals*. Consider the ideology of NACOHUS time:

So, Great Intellectuals! I was saying, the context in which you call yourself Intellectual, the era of that context has gone, the answers to all the questions have been found, all the problems have been solved, it's good that history has ended, teach some anecdotes and stories to the children, that's the history. . . . The rest, brother, in this era, writing is that which can be understood immediately; wisdom is that which brings you NACOHUS. That is why you have been called to give wisdom, OK? . . . Understand this, in this post-history, post-narrative, post-Alaa, post-falls era, the only reason to do Homo-informatics is to develop newer technologies . . . theoretical science, and abstract mathematics are also useless things . . . what, like you people, these writers, artists, intellectuals, idiots, will be able to give the world . . . nothing? (Agarwal 2016:131)

This paragraph indicates the ideology of the new techno-authoritarian state, which is based on technological supremacy. The slogan of the techno-authoritarian state is "It is a sin to be intellectual, and *technectual* is your supreme authority" (Agarwal 2016:154), and that is the novel's concluding chapter.

FEAR, SEXUALITY, AND VIOLENCE

Democracy is not merely a system of governance. It is also how we define our relationship with nature, other human beings, and ourselves. The republican values that emerged in India during the freedom struggle had liberty, equality, and fraternity as essential components. The national movement brought people together to participate in the political process. Adopting the universal adult franchise provided confidence to its citizens belonging to different social hierarchies. For the first few decades, the state worked to democratize social relations by implementing the principles of citizenship. The new spaces were created to realize the dream of shared democratic experiences. The schools, hospitals, political institutions, and cultural spaces were sanitized for the participation of citizens without any discrimination. Even if they were not in ideal form in terms of being fully egalitarian, the guiding principle was legal and social equality. The euphoria of the freedom struggle guided the nation's mood. The political leadership was respected, and it was responsive. In an exciting interview with Lothar Lutze, Phanishwar Nath Renu has explained it:

You see, in politics, the people here would look upon the political leader with profound respect and would consider him something like a god. There was a time once, during

British rule, when people seeing someone who wore *khaddar* enter their village would render him every service, thinking to themselves, “The poor fellow will go to jail; what will he get to eat there?”—And they would feed him whatever good things they had in their house. Once, this was the *image* they had of him. Slowly, very, very slowly, when he got into power [this image changed], and the thing is, you cannot make a fool of the people, or anybody, for long. The people do not understand this dual character, triple character—there is one thing they understand: What’s right is right, what is black is black, what is white [is white]. So, they did not know how to add any colour in between to this, and they believed that these politicians—whether they were Congressmen, Communists, or Socialists—were much above them, were their servants, and had sincere sympathy for them. “Therefore,” the people thought, “we may be thieves, we may be scoundrels, but they cannot afford to be so. We may be liars, but they are superior people—like the *sadhus* and saints—who would teach and serve others. They must be like that.” (Lutze 1985)

This was the image that the political class inherited from the freedom struggle. They were respected for their sacrifice. People used to see them as *Panchparmashwar*—people above the narrow self-interest. *Khadi* and Gandhi Topi (a white cap made of *khadi*) used to be the symbols of the new political class that emerged from the freedom struggle with the legacy of Gandhi and Nehru. Things transformed gradually as the form remained the same but the content changed. The politics declined, and democratic values were compromised. Interestingly, people had the intelligence to understand this. They lost their trust in the political class, which damaged democratic values. Eventually, democracy was reduced to merely a matter of formal representation. This transition took place slowly, but it was deep, and in this process, political parties became more important than the political person. The nature of the party system was transformed from being democratic to authoritarian in terms of their organizational culture. How could an undemocratic political party save democracy? This paved the way for introducing techno-authoritarian characteristics in the state as party leadership started relying more on election-management technology, including money and manipulative voting methods. The leaders began losing their connectivity with the people and their issues.

Consequently, democracy became a capital-intensive industry, following the rule of the market, of course, a different kind of market in which purchasing power was defined not only by money for buying voters but also by populism based on identity. With this emergence of “market” democracy, a techno-authoritarian state emerged and redefined the game’s rules. It has transformed the nature and character of the political class, electoral politics, and the relationship between the party and its followers. Capturing this fundamental transformation is the key to understanding the features of Indian democracy

and the nature of the state today. The novel *Mahabhoj* adequately captures this change: “That is when a deadly wind blew into politics, dragging down key politicians’ spines and turning them into a tail that used to jiggle in front of its seniors. Democracy was there for drumming and cursing, but its reality was that the Praja [public] was dishonest, and the tantra [system] was dependent on the willfulness of a small number of people” (Bhandari [1979] 2015:49). It is important to remember that his observation was made in the decade of the 1970s. Social scientists missed this emerging trend in the Indian polity. Renu indicated something while speaking of the decline in the postindependence dream, which Mannu Bhandari confirmed in the 1970s. The decline continued, and its level went incredibly low.

There are many exciting aspects of this techno-authoritarian state. For instance, it survives by instilling fear in the people’s minds. There is a return to the Hobbesian state of nature; each one fears the other; there is a fear of uncertainty; there is a fear of the invisible hand of the state. Fear is the key to the survival of the techno-authoritarian states. In *Mahabhoj*, there is fear among the marginalized people. It is fear of the local *Bahubali* (muscleman), the political leader, and the police. Police stations represent the state’s coercive power at the grassroots level, and fear is an essential factor in maintaining the aura of this institution. The fear is so prevalent in *Mahabhoj* that nobody dares to tell the truth about the episodes of fire in the Basti or about the murder committed. Everyone knows about who had it done, but the inquiry suggests that it was a fire by chance, and instead of murder, it was a case of suicide. To comprehend this point, look at the discussion between the friends *Ve Vahan Kaid Hain* about fear:

“Then how will you kill that girl, that blind, that sick, that life with a trident if she is not a Hindu?” [Jeevan is the name of a sick child in the house of the professor whom both the friends respect.]

“Whether I will be able to kill or not, it is a thing for later, but I can kill—creating that fear has become necessary now. . . .

“A bit earlier, you were talking about ending compassion. Now, you are talking about creating fear. What a terrible life and future you want to make; all of you, your philosophy, fear soaks everything up, Chinmoy. All the consciousness inside, dignity. The wall of soul, even to its roots.” (Priyamvad [1994] 2002:31)

It is important to note that fear is the core tool of authoritarianism, accumulating anxiety in the human subconscious. It is the accrued anxiety that is the source of depression and nightmares.

The novel has several dream sequences in which the protagonist experiences the fear installed in the subconscious. The protagonist of the NACOHUS suffers in the dream. The fear of the authoritarian state was installed in his subconscious, expressed in the following words: “What is the colour of fear? Sometimes brown, little red, sometimes

green, sometimes saffron, sometimes like rainbow? Maybe even white . . . like shrouds” (Agarwal 2016:31). The series of dream sequences in this novel suggests the deep relation between fear in real life and the unusual symbols of it appearing in the dream of the protagonist⁴; however, his friends correctly diagnose the problem:

Subconscious and all are fine . . . but the factory of nightmares isn't in the subconscious; it's somewhere else, and to that point, neither you bastard intellectuals' Freud Baba and his water-hen disciple Jung's reach is, nor of our native *Yogis* [practitioner of Yoga], *Babas* [a term used as a mark of respect to refer to Hindu ascetics], *Ammas* [mother; leaders of New Religious Movements]. . . . You are a member of a community of nightmares. . . . Learn to live with nightmares . . . otherwise, what is the point of the membership? (Agarwal 2016:28)

One can analyze paragraph after paragraph related to the artificially generated fear factor strengthened by the technological simulation. Fear is becoming part of the ideological state apparatus for the first time. One feels the invisible eyes of the state all around—eyes empowered by technology to penetrate the deepest layers of our being. There is no doubt that fear is antithetical to democracy, and the simple consequence of anxiety as a political concept is the decline and rise of the techno-authoritarian state.⁵

Another unexplored dimension of the widespread fear and anxiety in society is sexual violence. There is a paradigm shift in this realm. Sexual violence now is not a product of the usual desire for physical, sexual satisfaction. Still, it expresses deep frustration aimed at humiliating the person or the community. Consider such an episode in *Ve Vahan Kaid Hain*:

“That day, you asked if I have the flag of humanity?” . . . Look, he opened the zip of the pants, put his hand inside, and kept the penis on his palm, “Look at this, grab this flag.” He dragged Dadu by holding his hand. Dadu closed his fist with all the force he had. . . .

“Do you know where we will pitch this flag? In between your daughter's thighs . . . look at the flag.” (Priyamvad [1994] 2002:108)

This kind of sexual aggression is a product of long-accumulated anxiety in the personal and collective subconscious. The point becomes more visible in *NACOHUS*:

Yes, Mr. Reuben, what were you saying?” Why don't the people with hurt sentiments argue. . . .Why do they get down to beating . . . isn't it? This matter is beyond your understanding. What do you know about feeling proud

about one's existence that we feel when you are treating the pain of your feelings by beating them up or getting it done . . . you aren't able to believe right . . . ok, someday experience it yourself . . . joke not . . . just, once, someday . . . aah . . . ooh . . . experience the happiness. It's almost ironic . . . you see. . . . Whether a man is a chameleon or a human . . . he always seeks out the evacuation of his anger, frustrations and depression through sex. (Agarwal 2016:148)

This is something unique, as one always wonders why the nature of sexual violence is changing in India. These texts suggest that there is a deeper connection between the crisis of capitalism, state authoritarianism, fundamentalism, and sexual violence. When considering any project reclaiming republican democracy, it is essential to understand this complexity. The so-called theories of populism being advanced to comprehend the contemporary crisis may not be enough to give us the depth of our problems in India.

CONCLUSION

This article analyzes three novels from Hindi literature written at separate times. The first novel, *Mahabhoj*, written in 1979, captures the initial years of the decline of Indian democracy. This was also the decline of the system of one-party dominance in Indian politics. The leaders of the dominant political party carrying the legacy of the Indian National Movement and that of Gandhi and Nehru started showing the symptoms of compromising democratic values. The protagonist representing the party got involved in the worst electoral manipulation involving state institutions and creating social conflict. The second novel, *Ve Vahan Kaid Hain*, was written in 1994, in the background of majoritarian politics marked by the rise of Hindutva and the demolition of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya. It explains the micropolitics of the Hindutva movement and shows the further decline of values in society and politics. Remarkably, it shows the political economy dimension of this new phase of Indian politics in which the neoliberal value system got intertwined with majoritarian politics. This was a new phase that was so clearly visible in society. Symbolically, it was represented by the attack on a famous professor of history and the installation of the worst kind of fear in the minds of intellectuals. The third novel, *NACOHUS*, shows the continued process and gives possible future directions, as it is a dystopian novel. It is full of violence, nightmares, abuses against intellectuals, and state authoritarianism. Social scientists in India have yet to be able to capture this process and the complexity of it. The process continues, and I guess it has yet to climax.

This article suggests that the decline of republican democracy and the rise of techno-authoritarian states must be comprehended in their multiple dimensions. One always wonders why the crime related to women has increased so much. What is further surprising is the nature of rape cases, which does not indicate by any means the product of human desire to have sexual pleasure. It is the consequence of the aggression that people have imbibed in themselves. The techno-authoritarian state has profound implications for

our conscious and subconscious behavior. The deepening philosophical crisis of capitalism might result in the strengthening of the techno-authoritarian state. One can read it between the lines of the following decision of the UP government: According to the Uttar Pradesh Special Security Force (UPSSF) Act 2020, the force will not require a magistrate's order or warrants to make an arrest or conduct searches. A set of rules by the state government will govern its powers (*Indian Express*, September 14, 2020). This only indicates the beginning of something coming. This time, reclaiming republican democracy will not be easy, as the transition is a kind of ontic mutation.

NOTES

1. It is important to note that it was reported on September 9, 2020, that some men in black masks were trying to enter Alexievich's apartment. This is the kind of new phase of techno-authoritarian states almost everywhere globally. She wrote, "They have stolen our country, and now they are trying to abduct the best of us. But hundreds of others will come to replace those who have been taken away from our ranks. It was not the Coordination Council that rebelled, it was the entire country that raised" (Karmanau 2020).
2. Lacan uses two interrelated concepts: imago and mirror stage. *Imago* refers to the mental image of oneself formed at the early stage of human life. This image is not just a visual representation but encompasses the child's perception of themselves, influenced by interactions with the external world, primarily through primary caregivers. This image also influences the identity choices that the person makes in their life. This theory of imago is closely related with Lacan's concept of the mirror stage, which he thinks occurs when a child recognizes their reflection in a mirror, usually between six and eighteen months of age. Lacan proposed that this recognition leads to the formation of the ego, as the child identifies with the image in the mirror. The formation of the imago is a critical moment in a child's development, as it marks the beginning of the ego's lifelong tension between the internal sense of self and the external image. It introduces the child to the symbolic order, a key Lacanian concept referring to the realm of language, culture, and societal norms. These two concepts could be crucial for making sense of this phase of identity formation. This explains human beings' emotional attachment to culture. (For details, see Lacan 2003.)
3. *Mandal-Kamandal* indicates two kinds of politics of identity in India that have deeply influenced the political scenario since the 1980s. Mandal symbolically represents the caste politics, whereas Kamandal represents the communal politics of the Hindutva forces.
4. A social scientist should document and explore the clinical diaries of the psychoanalysts of contemporary times. I remember talking to a psychiatrist in Kashmir while doing a project on conflict; he had similar stories to share.
5. "Azadi had become a defining rallying call of the anti-CAA protests. This was the Azadi, or freedom, promised in the constitution—liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship. Those young people who organised the protests, bearing portraits of Gandhi in one hand and Ambedkar in the other, are today being

summoned and interrogated by the police and jailed without bail as rioters, conspirators, and secessionists. While rejecting her bail plea, a judge of the Delhi High Court reprimanded one young activist. ‘When you choose to play with embers’, he admonished her, ‘you cannot blame the wind.’ ” (Mander 2020:8)

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Spaces of Progress and the Challenge of “Mindfulness” in a Postcolonial World

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ABSTRACT

Progress implied both change and improvement in the colonial and postcolonial world. Such a concept of progress came to be enshrined in specific geographical places. The notions of development and underdevelopment in the postcolonial context thereafter supplanted this idea. Over time, while the structures of colonial domination dissolved, those of embedded regional inequalities came to be deeply entrenched, thereby urging for Thich Nhat Hanh’s approach to “mindfulness” in a “postcapitalist,” postcolonial world. The key question is whether postcolonialism has reached an impasse in its delivery and deployment of ideas across the widening gulf between the spaces of progress and stagnancy. The ideas of colonial and postcolonial “progress” have profound material consequences for the future of people, regions, and spaces.

Taking the cue in the call for an “empirical investigation” into postcolonial studies, the first part of this paper focuses on the history of ideas of Progress, its lapse into Providence, and the eventual rearticulation of Progress to include both the material and the moral. The battle between the traditionalist-liberal-secular versus the utilitarian-evangelical and the humanitarian is played out in the Indian subcontinent. The second part of this paper outlines the spaces of progress and thereby elucidates those regions which were used as exemplars in highlighting progress in the empire and of the empire. The material and moral progress reports from India produced masques of plenty in the colonial world of orderliness, and at the same time, the discourses brought to the fore the reality of dissatisfaction that continued to plague colonial authorities.

KEY WORDS Colonial-Postcolonial; Progress; Moral vs. Material; Mindfulness; Regional Disparity

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Imperialism was taken to mean the moral triumph of “civilization” over “barbarity.” As Kiernan noted, the 18th-century people’s understanding of the empire also changed radically with changes in the imperial overseas expansion and with greater political accountability enforced by the portal of democracy in the British Parliament. The 18th-century imperialists were seen as gentlemanly capitalists, paternalistic and benign towards the needs of the “natives.” Indeed, the economic foundationalism of the imperial context needed to be sensitized to the cultural and gender nuances of the period. The interrelational element of the new imperial history appears most attractive for future analysis; thus, the metropole is not separate from the colony, and each influences the other in a far more interdependent manner than has been credited. Imperial space was constantly transgressed by the rhetoric of empire, its practices, cultures, people, and value systems. The morality of the empire came into conflict with the sensibilities of the imperial-evangelical virtues. This was witnessed in the impeachment of governor-generals such as Warren Hastings, Lord Wellesley, Sir G. Barlow, and Elijah Impey (1885) who had transgressed the norms and laws of a civilized society.

The role of historical continuity in the persistence of spaces of development and underdevelopment is important. This is what the “postcolonial theory doesn’t say” (Lazarus 2011:3). The significant role of historical projects set in place almost three hundred years ago has not been appreciated in the postcolonial debates, and the fact that this has influenced the current features of India’s developmental morphology calls for acknowledgment in a postcolonial world. Here one can see a clear imposition of the “logic of unilateral capital” (Lazarus 2011:4) in the emergence of diverse projects associated with the material and moral progress of the empire. Indeed, progress and civilizational debates will have little relevance unless anchored in terms of their geographical referents.

Postcolonial discourse of late has reached an impasse, and this is reinforced because of the contradictory nature of the project, which somehow has not received the necessary focus over the period (see Procter and Morey 2004). What is at stake here is the continuity amidst the cataclysmic economic, social, and political transformation being rendered in former colonies. The rapidity of these changes is quite significant, and while attempts are made to dismantle the erstwhile structures of an era, the byproduct that has emerged or is emerging is far from stable. In this respect, one is not sure if a decolonized geography in a postcolonial world has been a game changer or has led to a dismissal of the entrenched structures which has continued since the pre- to the colonial and postcolonial eras.

The role of the location of such debates is critical in assessing the positionality of postcolonial geography. Going beyond the “tyranny of quotationality and citation” (Goldberg and Quayson 2002:xvii), my emphasis is on the nature of postcolonial continuity, which is based on a relentless engagement with the exploration of sources and material facts. As Parry (2004:66) and Procter and Morey (2004:60) note, the impasse has been achieved because of the “privileging of textualist over materialist analyses of colonial discourses.” The continued fetishization of colonial tropes, such as bondage and slavery, morphing into “woken” identities as a dematerialized metaphor for oppression has resulted in diminishing the distinctive role played by the ever-changing nature of capitalism. Lazarus addressed this very point. To distance from the postmodern injunctions against willful grand narratives, the present postcolonial discourses have sought to insulate

themselves from any engagement with the continued pervasive influence of capitalism in determining the fate of the "postcolonial other." These again reiterate Parry's (2004:78) admonishment of "sanctioned occlusions." Have we missed the point of this material relocation of current postcolonial debates? What is the historical evidence which provides us with the established architecture of form and structure of postcolonial reality?

The demands of a semiotic interpretation—i.e., of representations, meaning making, and signification—of postcolonial conditions have overridden all assertions of the stranglehold of structures thereby exposing the banality of explanations in a "real" world. There is a sense that postcolonial explanations have become increasingly divorced from the real, in favor of the imagined or the expected. Thus, "oversimplification, caricatures, and trivialisation" have much to be blamed for this situation (Procter and Morey 2004:62; see also Bartolovich and Lazarus 2002). The mobility of postcolonial discourses has failed to keep up with the objective realities on the ground in the postcolonial state. The pervasive exploitation, the regional underdevelopment, the existence of apathy for the plight of the poor, the marginalized, and indeed the glorification of gratuitous violence perpetrated in the name of progress have become deeply entrenched in most geographical spaces. Indeed, Eurocentrism, multiculturalism, and the like have little meaning when faced with deeply entrenched global and regional challenges. Postcolonialism will have to come to terms with the geographical site more than an engagement with the semiotic voyeurism of the developing world. The "fetishization" of the West is therefore as counterproductive as the "semiotization" of the East.

"Postcolonial," as Lazarus (2011:6) states, was a "periodising term, an historical and not an ideological concept." This paper is an attempt to provide a postcolonial-historical and historiographical insight into the conditions of India's development. The texts analyzed in *The Moral and Material Progress of India* sought to engage with the narratives and counternarratives which emanated in the subcontinent from the 1860s onwards. Here, colonized identities were rebranded and rearticulated to subscribe to an imperial progress narrative to justify colonialism. Native response was a way to restore meaning to what they saw as progress (Fox 2008). Indeed, the material and moral progression of India was a periodizing concept, a historical construct, and an underwritten colonial/imperial ideological imperative. It started as a simple extension of lines of communication, roads, railways, bridges, barrages, building, and the fortification of the earliest settlement and gradually assumed a much more directed reinforcement of the imperatives of colonial rule in India. The 18th-century idea that material progress can be completed only with moral advancement, especially in transforming oppressive existing social practices, such as sati, infanticide, oppression of lower castes, and so on, and establishing policies and institutions that will endure for the future is something worth pondering in a postcolonial context.

To go beyond Eurocentrism suggests the need for "mindfulness" of the postcolonial conditions in space. Here, mindfulness as a construct is one of paying deliberate and careful attention to our historical past, our context, our environment, and the communities we live in. Thich Nhat Hanh, the renowned Vietnamese Buddhist scholar and teacher, described mindfulness as being "at the heart of the Buddha's teachings" (1991). This term has been used in this paper to reiterate the importance of attention to the present moment, which is

a product of the past colonial/imperial and present postcolonial/decolonial. It also means “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally” (Kabat-Zinn 1994:4–5). In fact, in the Pali canon, mindfulness is never devoid of conceptualization (Bodhi 2013:8; Hyland 2015:172). In this paper, this “mindfulness” is about reworking our historical colonial and imperial past rather than “refraining from passing judgements” as was believed in its earlier iterations (see Dreyfus 2013:47).

We recognize the context, the responses in history, and its outcomes on geographical scales. What was entailed in the construction of modern India from a non-Westernized precolonial perspective? How was the object of knowledge structured? Situating historical projects of material and moral progress is critical to a postcolonial assessment of development. This material and moral progression of India through the late 18th century saw a “forced integration of hitherto non-capitalist societies . . . into a capitalist world system” (Lazarus 2012:11). It is easy to highlight what was destroyed in all that was indigenous; however, it will be far more pertinent to state what was transformed in this process. Today there are political leaders of the old school, who vociferously reinforce the distinction between rural, or “Bharat,” versus urbane, or “India.” The capitalist dimension of colonial and postcolonial development needs to be acknowledged in this context. We need to go beyond civilizational euphemism in the postcolonial constructs to address the key issues of liberalism, identity, poverty, inequality, rights and justice, and exploitation in a transforming world.

PROGRESS AS AN IDEA AND AS A NORM

This section attempts to locate the idea of progress in the Empire in the context of a particular space and time. During the Age of Enlightenment, the idea of progress was a characteristic and important part of the worldview of the educated, literate citizens. This idea of progress underwent key convulsions as it was supplanted into the Indian empire. While the project of “progress” started with an intention to ameliorate the masses, there remained fractured spaces of underdevelopment, of historical neglect.

PROMINENT NOTIONS OF PROGRESS

The doctrine of progress related naturally to Victorian optimism, especially in the wake of the Industrial Revolution. It remained the single most influential idea to measure the advancement of any civilization, territory, region, or state. This was like the 21st-century credit rating agency, canonizing the credo of progress through the mire of economic pessimism and optimism. The idea of progress maintained an unchallenged belief until the 1880s and gradually was replaced by other avatars of colonial modernity. As Livingstone notes, “Is progress to be measured by greater power over nature, the democratisation of happiness, higher gross national product, more information . . .” (2006:560). The concept emerged in the late 17th century and reached its apogee by the middle of the nineteenth century (Bowler 1989; Bury [1920] 2006; Javary 1851; Nicholls 2011; Nisbet 1980; Spadafora 1990). All these scholarships reinforced the temporal over the spatial

dimensions of progress (see Livingstone 2006:562). Progress had to be grounded in space to make any sense for the living. This brings into sharp relief the distinction between progress, with a small *p*, and Progress, with a large *P*. The latter focused on major achievements since the Enlightenment, such as areas of metrology, and scientific and instrumental assessment of the globe. The former was more in terms of the translation of change in obscure spaces/regions (i.e., colonies). "At the heart of every theory of progress lies a conception of the ultimate good, and progress is thought to occur in proportion as the ultimate good triumphs in history" (Wagar 1967:56). It is a fact that the most common belief of 19th-century scholars was that the idea of progress was a product of the modern spirit and that humans became aware of progress as a "grand design of history" only in the 17th and 18th centuries. As Comte noted, in choosing between order and progress, the ancients opted for order because they considered both order and progress as antithetical principles. The influence of Christianity as a religion reinforced the significance of "social progress" and morality in the new era. It was with the advancement of the Renaissance period that one saw the idea of progress take off (Flint 1894:88, 90, 158, 104; Wagar 1967:58).

Bury ([1920] 2006) claimed that the idea of progress was an import from the French Enlightenment; however, Spadafora (1990:3) claims otherwise and has shown the prevalence of this idea being embedded through the Georgian and eventually Victorian "mental climate" (see the discussions led by Wagar 1967:61). The first recognized scientific ideas of progress came to be associated with the works of Turgot, Condorcet, and Comte, "[b]ut their thought grew in turn out of such fundamental conceptions as the Golden Age, organic evolution, the continuity and regularity of the cosmos, and Jesus' prophecy of the gradual coming of the Kingdom of Heaven, all conceptions which had arisen in antiquity" (Wagar 1967:58). In this period, progress as a concept came to be closely aligned with faith (Bury [1920] 2006; Inge 1920; Mommsen 1951; Todd 1918; Troeltsch [1912] 2013). It was indeed Bury (Wagar 1967:60) who firmly established the foundations of the idea of progress as a "uniquely modern faith". He was keen to ensure his idea of progress did not lapse into the 'idea of Providence' (Wagar 1967:60). For the idea of progress to take root in Imperial India, (1) the authority of the ancients had to be challenged and all thoughts had to be liberated, (2) the value of a secular life had to be acknowledged away from religious dogmas, and finally, (3) science had to be reinforced on strong foundations based on the invariability of the laws of nature. All these changes were ushered in gradually from the 18th and 19th centuries. As Wagar (1967:60) notes, "By the early [eighteenth] century, western civilisation was ready for its first theory of general progress, enunciated by the Abbe de Saint-Pierre [(Bury 1920, chapter 6)]."

THE LAPSE OF PROGRESS INTO PROVIDENCE

The theory of progress as a metaphysical claim reinforced the idea of being an inevitable process, of immanent change (Butterfield 1950:95–97; Spadafora 1990:5). The problem with this is the fact that sometimes, progress is presented as an abstraction, which ignores the spatial-social context, thereby resulting in what Livingstone (2006:577) called the vexatious problem of progress with a small *p* and large *P*. Indeed, he aptly suggests that

everything “global is local at every point” (p. 577). What are the social, political, and geographical conditions which have led to the rolling out of the material and moral progress in India?

It is therefore important to identify political, social, and religious groups that allowed for the introduction and embedding of the idea and plan for progress in the colonial state; thus, progress has been defined as a movement over time and space toward the betterment of social, political, and material conditions. There is an implicit idea of improvement or advancement. This idea, while cautious of reification of people and spaces, also allowed a historical assessment of the postcolonial condition. As Spadafora (1990:7) notes, “Although there is only one idea of progress, there is a multitude of possible expressions of the idea . . . or doctrines of progress.” Eighteenth-century Britain saw the idea of progress being firmly established from the 1730s to the 1780s and thereafter with the rise of class consciousness and its related antagonism, creating a new departure towards ideas of “improvement” (Spadafora 1990:9). There was the emergence of ideas of “secularism, humanism, freedom,” all of which were embraced under the rubric of modernity, of reform and science. The demand for toleration reduced the tensions between the liberal secularists of critical reasoning (derived from the Newtonian and Lockean schools of thought) and the Evangelical Methodist or Nonconformist, High Anglican, and Utilitarians. Christian or eschatological progress therefore became a distinct form of modernity, apart from the notion of civilizational progress advocated by the secularists (Dawson [1929] 2001:190–91; Wagar 1967: 62–66). The question is, Why did the idea of religious moral progress take root in Britain and not in the French context? The answer lies in the period after 1760, the ascendancy of the British Empire, and the parallel rise of secularists and evangelicals. As Trevelyan notes, “Victorian belief in progress was a conditional affair” (Spadafora 1990:386). Progress in a colonial space, and indeed in the postcolonial contexts, emerged as a “regulative ideal” (Livingstone 2006:574). Initially, the idea of progress came to denote material improvement or general “Progress” and gradually lapsed into a “Providential” affair, encapsulated under the rubric of the moral, or improvement of humans.

As Bowler (1989:vii) noted, “Material progress was also an age dominated by a fascination with the past.” The reason for this is because of the increasing ruptures/tensions which were emerging in Victorian-dominated societies across the empire, and it was imperative to resuscitate a sense of continuity with the past. Recognizing the purposeful direction of change or progress was important for this period, yet there were others, such as John Stuart Mill (1848), who were emphatic that the past was long dead and gone, consigned to the embers of history. Likewise, Jeremy Bentham took a far more ahistorical position towards progress and emphasized the primacy of “individualism” towards the realization of happiness and improvement. Thus, Bowler (1989:2) believed that “the very idea of progress was imposed upon history to create a sense of order (which) the Victorians craved.” The resultant effect was a lack of unanimity about the nature and character of progress among diverse groups. Progress, therefore, was multiple in form and content and was easily extendable to the regions of the vast empire. Material and moral progress was designed to create order out of chaos, leading to two distinct strands of progressionist-versus-cyclic views of development (Bowler 1989:8). The Victorians were keenly engaged

with the idea of a cyclic view of progress, which was focused on civilizational changes from period to period. The role of geography, of space, became critical in this form of analysis, which distinguished between progress visualized in diverse climatic regimes, among differentiated political entities, from despotic to democratic, and enlightened to secular societies. The rise of Whig interpretation of progress could be sharply contrasted with those of the evangelicals and secularists (see Bowler 1989 for an extended discussion on this theme). The only hope and salvation for Imperial India was to undergo a messianic, brutal intervention, the likes of which had never been seen or experienced before, and salvation was presented via modern science. Bury maintained that the idea of progress is comparatively recent, dating to the 16th century. *Progress in knowledge* did not automatically translate into *improvement for humanity*, because any development of arts and inventions promoted luxury and thereby vice. Progress was embodied in the shift from savagery to civilization, with the harnessing of fire, water, precious metals, agriculture, ships, walled townships, roads, and codified laws. The 19th century saw the emergence of the idea of "laws of progress," as implied by Turgot and Condorcet, in which society will be remodeled on scientific principles. Darwin's 1859 *The Origin of Species* reinforced this belief, and Herbert Spencer declared, "Progress therefore is not an accident, but a necessity. . . . What we call evil and immorality must disappear. It is certain that man must become perfect" (Spencer 1896:530).

REARTICULATION OF PROGRESS TO INCLUDE THE MORAL WITH THE MATERIAL

While material progress was conditional and achieved on the continued success of enterprising individuals, this perspective allowed for the replacement of a declining civilization/race with a superior race, i.e., the British. Such a view also reinforced the imperatives of colonialization and its associated modernity. There was a clear call for a change from the absolutism of the despots in India to that of a liberal form of governance (Bowler 1989; Embree 1962; Fischer-Tine and Mann 2004; Grant 1813; Mann 2004; Marriott 2003); thus, liberation from this Oriental despotism became the justification for the establishment of colonial rule under the Crown. It was justified that paternalistic government could remove unjust subjugation of the uncivilized population under the Moghuls and others. Moral and material progress was predicated and articulated by accommodating Indian idioms of sovereignty. What was material? What was moral?

The history of subjugation under unenlightened rulers in the subcontinent called for a new form of paternalistic government undertaken by the British colonial government. This was a form of "Philanthropic Enlightenment" (Mann 2004:5). Such a civilizing mission called for a patron-client or master-servant relationship. The emergence of Christian missionaries, or "Evangelicals," from the Methodists to the Anglicans, and the Jesuits resulted in the call for a new "moral" order. This moral agency reinforced the Victorian sensibility of respectability. The Clapham Sect became a key influence on the moral ordering of not just the British nation but also of the colonies. This resulted in a vociferous campaign for the abolition of slavery, for education, and for the spread of the Bible in the colonies. The civilizing agenda for the Indian empire was based on the religious

and moral improvement of the “natives.” As Mann (2004) notes, this idea of improvement was not confined to the colonies but also was a major initiative to deal with the “outcasts” of the City of London. India became a space for experimentation of various moral strategies to be applied in the metropolises across the empire. Indeed, Mill (1826) ranked India among the “uncultivated nations,” especially because of the way women were degraded and portrayed in society. He also castigated the ceremonialism of pompous behavior, entrenched casteism, and general mildness of behavior. The defective legal system was unenlightened, produced general “rudeness,” and promoted barbarism under the Moghuls. Chatterjee (2011:687) averred that the idea of progress and improvement of the empire was based on a self-perpetuated myth by a liberal, democratic Britain keen to maintain a despotic stranglehold on the riches of the Raj. In India, by the middle of the nineteenth century, both Macaulay and Mill exerted major doctrinal influence on the idea of progress. India saw the adoption of a utilitarian vision of progress (Stokes 1990), which included general progress of improvement (material) and improvement of humans (moral).

THE TRADITIONALIST-LIBERAL-ORIENTALIST-SECULAR VERSUS THE UTILITARIAN-EVANGELICAL-ANGLICIST

The secular credentials of materialist advancement in Britain and Europe encouraged Orientalists such as William Jones to justify a framework for moral progress in India, while Nathaniel Halhed emphasized the civilizational divide between Britain and India. They mastered the Indian language and culture and were at pains to emphasize the rise and decline of the ancient Indian civilization (see Marshall 1970); thus, a liberation from “oriental despotism” was the first stage in the resuscitation of India towards embedding colonial modernity. This spurred the incredible material advancement witnessed in the Raj. This resulted in the introduction of Western institutions of learning, hospitals, roads, railways, and telegraphs considered critical for the general improvement and amelioration of the country; thus, the colonial administration benefitted from these major interventions in the name of material and moral progress. The advancement of rational law since the 1860s under the Civil and Criminal Procedures Code was reflected systematically in the reports of the material and moral progress of the empire. Technology and science, too, emerged as the key tools for governance and material improvement of the subject race.

The Orientalists included William Jones, Nathaniel Halhed, and Warren Hastings, and the Anglicists included Charles Grant, Lord Cornwallis, William Bentinck, and Lord Dalhousie. The Orientalist-Anglicist controversy on the reforming agenda of India gained sharper focus from 1812 leading up to the renewal of the East India Company Charter. There were “Traditionalists,” namely Edmund Burke, who protested such a radical reforming zeal of the “Utilitarians.” He was emphatic that India could be effectively governed not by dismantling traditional institutions but by building on them. The underlying angst was reinforced by the incredible reforming zeal of evangelicals and utilitarians and the rebellion of 1857, which put to rest any liberal overtures by the East India Company towards India. It was Charles Grant who provided the backdrop for a major shift in attitudes to progress in India and presented a major challenge to the Traditionalist-Orientalist-Liberalist-Secular noninterventionist position in India. His *Observation on the*

State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain (1792)¹ dismissed the Orientalist’s position of a civilizational response to the governing of ancient India. Instead, he called for radical reforms to transform the “depraved state of Indian society” (Embree 1962:141–57; see also Grant 1813:59–72). Of import was the emphasis on gender relations and the treatment of women in Indian society. Education and the introduction of the English language (Macaulay) and of the Christian faith became the basis for the moral progression of India. Grant also believed that, unlike the Americans, the “effeminate” Indians lacked the “manly” instinct to demand independence from British rule and sought a permanent relationship that endured the test of time. This was translated into the idea of assimilation of Indian society into colonial forms of modernity rather than attempting to pursue a path of equality for the Indian subjects in the empire (Mann 2004:11). For this purpose, the “natives” were to be reminded of their subject status, one of subordination and obedience, and not of equality.

Education fostered a sense of individualism to fight against the degenerate tyranny of religion and despots. The reform of government, the rule of law, and the introduction of taxation policy were robust programs for the civilizing mission of material and moral progression of the Indian subcontinent. Western-orientated reforms were initiated from the 1820s to the 1850s; thus, British rule became synonymous with Progress and the betterment or improvement of society. Indeed, even after the First War of Independence of 1857, the volumes of *Material and Moral Progress of India* continued to highlight the achievements of the civilizing mission. The role of scientific technology, which spurred the growth of steamboats, railways, and telegraphs linking diverse cities and remote destinations, became key icons of material progress. The Victorian ethos of modernization of British India was at the heart of this enterprise.

MORAL PROGRESS

Tangible signs of material progress in the British Empire were visible by the establishment of railways, telegraphs, cities, ports, and lighthouses. The intangible aspect of colonial rule—that of *moral improvement*—was a greater challenge to pin down, except by highlighting the key strategic interventions at the social, cultural, and, indeed, ideological levels. These can be enumerated via the radical changes which were introduced in law and legality, in public instruction of education, thereby encroaching on the more embodied spaces in the form of a campaign for the abolition of sati/suttee, or voluntary immolation of widows, and of infanticide and feticide. Thus, “moral” as an entity was translated in diverse ways to ensure “progress” with a specific modern colonial ethos. There was, however, a distinction made between the secular and evangelical credentials of this moral mission, which raged through the subcontinent during the latter half of the 18th and 19th centuries. Despite the material improvement of Europe since the Industrial Revolution, the secular vision of progress never overwhelmed religious orthodoxy in Britain (Marriott 2003:10).

Material and moral progression was advanced through a series of interrelated activities. William Jones attempted to codify the legal system in India, which led to the immanent discovery of India’s civilizational history. Likewise, Thomas Munro laid the

foundations for the administration of land settlements, thereby providing a precursor to the Permanent Settlement Act on tenurial rights and responsibilities of *ryots* (tillers) and *zamindars* (landlords). Finally, James Renell's mapping of India also afforded the establishment of the enormous trigonometrical survey of the Indian subcontinent. As Marriott (2003) notes, these exercises were based on the ideas, knowledge, and methodologies derived from the West, yet they were adapted and implemented independently, without being a copy of the West (Edney 1997:27–28). On the inclusion of moral imperatives of progression, we can trace a clear alignment of ideas and intervention. William Robertson's classic ([1791] 1817), while highlighting the significance of ancient Indian culture and the progress of science and arts, insisted that the Europeans had surpassed the ancients, "proud in their superior achievements." He appealed to the European sense of morality to bring India to the same level of civilization (Marriott 2003:77; Robertson [1791] 1817:336).

LIBERAL VERSUS UTILITARIAN OR HUMANITARIAN TO MISSIONARY PHILANTHROPY

Eighteenth-century attitudes towards India were thus broadly shaped by Enlightenment thought (see Dyson 1978:19), and by the 19th century, these attitudes were replaced by a more rigid evangelicalism and radical utilitarianism, which sought to make interventions to shape the future of colonial society in the Raj (Marriott 2003:78). We also see evidence of how Enlightenment sensibilities influenced Kindersley (1777:180), a travel writer who suggested environment/climate, despotism, and superstition as key factors for the continuation of "laziness, stupidity, and lack of development" among Indians. Here again, we see aspects of environmental determinism and a call for moral reform. The emergence of a harsher morality-related discourse on Indian society came with the advent of the evangelicals and facilitated the production of knowledge in colonial India. The shift from humanitarian to missionary philanthropy caused a shift from secular-material to religious-moral provisions; thus, saving the "soul" became an immediate concern and a precondition of taking Indian society to the civilized world. This spurred the demand for scrutiny and increased classification and codification of Indian society (Thorne 1999:34). The earliest recorded instance of moral persuasion came from Joseph White when he urged the promotion of the universal and progressive message of Christianity "among our Mahometan and Gentoo Subjects" in India (White 1785).

Thus, Charles Grant, a prominent member of the East India Company (1768) reinforced the importance of *moral reform* in India as a precondition to *political reform*. He stated,

Inquiries into the evils that afflict the people and the means of addressing them are now deservedly become a business of Government, yet I shall fear that all remedies will prove ineffectual which have no respect to the moral and intellectual state of the inhabitants. . . . I am not, as you may believe for following the Mahomedan example of establishing opinions by the sword, but I certainly am for

helping those poor people whose land we enjoy. (Embree 1962:96–97; Morris 1904)

Based on his interactions in Bengal, Grant highlighted cruelty, lack of benevolence and affection, gross laxity of behavior and principle, indecency, licentiousness, malevolence, and animosity as key traits afflicting Indians. He believed that moral instructions would help to rectify these degenerate traits. Grant therefore did not subscribe to the hardened position of the evangelicals, instead seeking a middle path of enlightened humanism. His vision for India concurred with that of Robertson, “that the original inhabitants of Hindoostan never existed in a savage state, and only internal improvement would raise their level of civilisation” (Grant 1813:75). While he advocated knowledge of Englishness, printing, natural philosophy, agriculture, and mechanics as critical for progress, he was unreserved in his assertion for “Hindoos” to receive *western* knowledge of religion, thereby leading to the happiness of humans (Grant 1813:112); thus, caste and mythology of the “Hindoo” character came under severe observation to help eradicate social ills such as “suttee/sati and infanticide.”

Lord Cornwallis had reservations regarding the extent of intervention, whereas Wilberforce espoused the cause of the Clapham Sect to support a nonaggressive moral reform based on a reformatory educational system through the medium of English. While the role of Providence became a clear mandate for the transformation of Indian society, they also faced the conundrum of “moral laxity” among the colonialists in India (Buchanan [1805] 1812:201; Kumar 2005): “The natives of Hindostan are a divided people. They have no common interest. To disseminate new principles among them is not difficult. They are less tenacious of opinion than of custom” (Buchanan [1805] 1812:205). Thus, moral progression in effect was the fulfillment of Christian destiny, “not through the false creed of a Romish church sunk in the same darkness as Hinduism, but by the united efforts of Protestant evangelicals” (Bearce 1961:80; Marriott 2003:93). What put a spanner to the moral agenda was the tenuous relationship that existed between the imperial mission and the evangelical mission. It was only with the combined efforts of Grant, Buchanan, and Wilberforce that the establishment of the Clapham Sect, or Clapham Saints (1790–1830), and their key role in winning concessions during the renewal of the East India Company Act 1813 (Charter Act) resulted in the legitimation of evangelical work in India (Stokes 1990). The charter declared, “Whereas it is the Duty of the Country to promote the interests and happiness of the native inhabitants of the British dominions in India . . . such measures ought to be adopted as may tend to the introduction among them of useful knowledge, and of religious and moral improvement” (East India Company Charter Act 1813:53).

MATERIAL PROGRESS AS INSCRIBED ACROSS SPACES

The Indian Office periodically issued a Blue Book purporting to describe the moral and material progress of India under British rule. Material progress is easily demonstrated:

There can be no doubt that trade is flourishing, cultivation is extending, and all the industrial pursuits have increased

and multiplied, while we have been taught many things that our fathers never knew. I am not so sure; by the way, whether progress is demonstrable in art, and I fear that you have not enhanced the poetical aspect of things in India. Art in its higher orders has hitherto, like morality, preferred a religious to a utilitarian motive: and when utility comes too obtrusively into the foreground, the artistic like the religious spirit becomes depressed and loses grasp of its principle. At this hour, a Hindu sculptor in outlying places will execute temples beautiful in design and detail because the subject only inspires and exalts inspiration but leaves it quite free. The introduction of your European patterns is confusing to the spiritual instinct as to form and colour; the imaginative faculty becomes superfluous: and then the immense European demand for "Indian curiosities" has demoralised our artisans, who instead of endeavouring to express the multiform religious idea, however grotesque are now employed in executing wholesale commercial orders according to sample. (*New York Times* 1885)

The earliest documented text on the material and moral progress of the British Empire for India was by James T. Callendar in *The Political Progress of Britain or An Impartial History of Abuses in the Government of the British Empire* (1795). This was followed by Robert Chatfield's (1808) *A Historical Review of the Community, Political and Moral State of Hindoostan from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*. Systematic reporting of progress was thus presented and made available from 1795 to 1923. Major reports that emerged during the period were for 1859, 1874, 1879, and 1882.

The Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India of 1859–60 highlighted the fatality of railway accidents in the East Indian Railways. The accidents were attributed to willful neglect of duty on the part of British-born subjects, key railway officials. Stringent punishment was supported in such cases (HMSO 1859–60:244). The overcrowding of trains in the third class was a major irritant (HMSO 1859–60:254). There was enhanced punishment to contractors for willful breaches of contract, especially those who received the money in advance to complete the work and disappeared (HMSO 1859–60:4–7).

The report discussed the suppression of the Moplah rebellion of 1859. Police administration and separation of judicial and police functions of the magistrate were highlighted in this report. There was also a slew of complaints made against the Postmaster General Office in Bengal for letters and parcels that went missing en route to England. There were also instances of unfounded complaints against a missing atlas to be delivered to Colonel Yule's office, which was eventually traced. Obtaining trustworthy letter carriers was a major headache for the post office. (HMSO 1859–60:30). The posting of a native student at Thomason College to the Department of Public Works was a source of consternation because having qualified and given the lowest pay in the starting grade was

considered enough incentive "to deprive the indolent and unambitious of any incentive to exertion. Complaints were universal of the practical inefficiency of the young men" (HMSO 1859–60:86). Accidental deaths on railways were reported. One sad incident reported was that "Inspector Thompson went to sleep lying on the railway when some empty wagons started to roll down without brakes. The coolies who were with him did not wake him in time, resulting in both his ears being chopped off" (HMSO 1859–60:133).

The frequency of murders in Singhbhoom in Chotanagpur (today known as Jharkhand) was said to have diminished because of the advancement of modern civilization. The report stated that the aboriginal people were lawless and it was only by 1833 that they were brought under control. Most murders were related to witchcraft, in that a suspicion of an evil eye could result in the decimation of families by rival families in the region. The rise of pauperism among Europeans and Eurasians emerged as a major concern, and a committee was established in 1892 to engage with measures to stem this situation; thus, uneducated Europeans inevitably became idle, profitless, and dangerous individuals and it therefore became necessary for the government to support the European individual (Pauperism Committee 1892:12). Suppression of the "Churruckh Poojah," or "hook swinging festival," of 1856–57 was another instance of moral reform. Here, the colonial authorities used administrative procedures to ban the festival in public spaces but also used their moral authority to persuade key persons in the community to induce the abandonment of the practice (HMSO 1859–60:62). The Santhal rebellion of 1855 and the Cossiyah rebellion of 1821, 1832 and of the Kookie rebellion in Chittagong and the Arracan Valley were reported. The policing of wild, head-hunting tribes was a major concern in the marginal spaces of the empire, northeast of India.

The Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India of 1870-7 noted the key challenges that were being perpetrated in the margins of the empire where colonial modernity was yet to be established. Ironically, it was partial and remained a fractured project of discontinuity in the postcolonial period. Key questions of infanticide and caste and religious riots were in focus. The report presented interesting insights into the suppression and domination of the Looshais (Lushais) of Mizoram in Northeast India. The frequent raids by diverse hostile tribes were a major source of irritants for the East India Company (Bayly 1999; Kumar 2006).

There was also concern about the progress in controlling infanticide, and the Infanticide Act came into existence in March 1870. As a result, any village having less than 40 girl children per hundred-child population was targeted for punitive sanctions by the colonial state. Two principal reasons assigned to the cause for infanticide were exorbitant marriage expenses for the bride's family and that during the Mohammedan period, Rajpoot girls were kidnapped to serve the harem of these rulers and chieftains. Infanticide had therefore gained currency in specific spaces, among specific communities. Frequent riots between Hindus and Muslims were a headache for the administration. The secular solution was not to allow the celebration of the Mohurram and Ramnawmi festivals on the same day. This elision happens once every 33 years on the full moon, on the lunar calendar. It was also reported that the missionaries found it difficult to break through the opposition against conversion to Christianity in the cities, then in the villages. The rural population was moved to accept Christianity, especially

among the tribals, and an indigenous population was less bound by caste ties. An extraordinary feature of Indian life that caught the attention of the administrators was the substantial number of human beings being killed by wild animals; thus, deaths by tigers, leopards, and snakebites were reported (HMSO 1870–71).

In 1879, Robertson noted the extent of population growth in the various regions of the empire. The census exercise has in effect changed the common perception and ideas of the vast population of India in terms of its races, regions, and religions. The text says that “Calcutta is drained and possesses a water supply far better than that of London, and as good as that of Glasgow” (Robertson 1879:47). In terms of the morals of the people, “whatever may be said of those in the larger towns, those who live in villages is no better and no worse than the same classes elsewhere. As a rule, the people of British India are temperate, chaste, honest, peaceful, singularly docile, easily governed and patient” (Robertson 1879:49). The establishment of the Indian universities in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay in 1857, during the aftermath of the Mutiny, was upheld as one singular achievement towards moral progress: “This was conducted befitting us, and worthy of the great name we have in the world as conquerors and as rulers” (Robertson 1879:50). The female education system organized in the zenanas, or private houses, was highlighted even though there was a lack of real demand among the “natives.” Robertson states, “Progress is very slow in all eastern countries and the dead slumber of ignorance still shrouds the women of India” (1879:51). Robertson’s lecture also highlighted the rise of liberal native press and the progress of Protestant missions since 1873. In terms of material improvement, the rise in the collection of land revenue was highlighted across the provinces. The increase of opium production for trade to China was presented along with the key challenge of eradication of infanticide in northwestern provinces. It was recorded that in Punjab, out of 358 murders of girl children in 1872, 140 sentences of death were pronounced. The assumption was that this was a hereditary practice which needed to be outlawed. The endemic famines in the provinces, which had caused stupendous financial losses and death, were decried. Robertson thus belonged to the generation who reflected the sentiments of the Orientalist when he stated, “Let us study the past history of our country and especially of its connection with India and we will unquestionably arrive at a just and prudent course of action” (1879:84). Writing in 1880, Robertson noted, “Gentlemen, we have put down disorder, anarchy and confusion in British India and conferred upon all its diverse races the blessings of civil and religious freedom. British India is no longer the estate of a few British subjects. It is an integral portion of the British Empire.” Likewise, in 1874, he stated, “British India comprehends a population exceeding 240,000,000 composed of different races, speaking a great variety of languages and are in very diverse stages of civilisation. Not so long ago, infanticide and human sacrifices were common in many districts in India.”

There were serious critical responses to *The Material and Moral Progress of India* by the native Indians. *The Hindu*, the leading Madras native paper, on October 1, 1885, described the state of things: “English merchants during a sway of nearly a century rifled the land of all its wealth. A century of plunder! And now what has succeeded it? The ‘spoliation of India,’ has it ceased? Certainly not. It is going on as vigorously as ever” (Murdoch 1886:41).

"It is lamentable how many reckless assertions are made, calculated to poison the minds of the people against the English." The Liberals on November 8, 1885, made the following statement: "Doubtless, English enterprise, and capital are seeking out the valuable products of India, which can be worked for the markets of the world. But the result is that the whole gain in these enterprises goes with the English capitalist, while the native labourer is left to appropriate whatever he can pick up in gleaning" (Murdoch 1886:45). "India now absorbs one-fourth of the gold and one-third of the silver produced throughout the whole world" (Murdoch 1886:46). Sir George Birdwood stated, "Scarcely a copy of the native papers is published without some complaint of the discourtesy and harshness of Europeans towards natives" (Murdoch 1886:115). Sir Alfred Lyall in *The Fortnightly* said of Hindus, "Amongst most of those millions the religious conception has not yet reached the particular stage at which one object of divine Government is understood to be the advancement of morals. On the other hand, there is a considerable minority whose ideas have passed beyond this stage, and who conceive their Divinity as supremely indifferent to all things material as well as moral" (Murdoch 1886:119).

In response to the question of whether India was becoming richer or poorer under British rule, *The Bengali* opinion was that "the ancient civilisation of India was superior far to that which Europe ever had." There is another idea still more prevalent: *The Edinburgh Review* said, "The assumption is spreading in a notable way among the half-educated classes that up to the appearance of the English, the Indians were living in a state of religious simplicity under various kings. The Golden Age has been succeeded by the Iron Age under the British" (Murdoch 1886:40).

The 1891–92 HMSO report noted the moral and material progress of tribes from the Assam Hills of the Northeastern Frontier Agency (NEFA). Agricultural indebtedness and education were seen as key issues. The standard of life of Nagas was compared to those of Khasis and Garos. The report ended with an interesting observation that "the population of Assam is above the Indian average in material prosperity but has not yet awakened to the advantages of its position." Likewise, the HMSO *Statement* of 1920–21 emphasized merits of philanthropy during famine in Kathiawar, particularly Servants of India, the Seva Samiti, the Bengal Social Service League, and the Bhagini Samaj of Gujarat. Thus, it was decided that the "uplift of the Indian people, economic, physical, and moral, really revolves itself into the question of education" (p. 162). The last two reviews highlighted the unsatisfactory progress in education, especially among the lower castes, and of female illiteracy.

Ghose (1921), in contrast, brought the voice of "enlightened" Indians while attempting to answer a test question, that "India is not a conquered country." He noted that India was better equipped than ever before to fight the scourge of famines. There was a redistribution of surplus stock across provinces. A Famine Insurance Fund was maintained by the state, and despite famines, the population of British India had increased by tens of millions in the past 10 years. Moreover, the fact that the Native States in the plains of India had increased by four million spoke volumes for the material benefits "sometimes so unreasonably disputed derived by India from her present administration" (Ghose 1921:83). He justified the colonial order by stating that "India is not a conquered country and that the English came to India as did others to trade and because the country was divided into

innumerable factions and contending elements. Inevitably, in the ensuing quarrels the British traders and mercenaries all got intricately embroiled supporting one or the other contending groups. The inevitable result was that the strength of character of the British and the power of their organisation brought them to the top” (Ghose 1921:117).

He was forthright in his articulations that “It is of great importance to note that when the British nation found itself in power, it did not abuse such power. On the contrary, it eventually rose to the height demanded by the greater part, which Providence thus called upon Great Britain to play” (Ghose 1921:118). As Butterfield (1950:95–97) notes, “Providence itself was progress or rather that progress was the work of providence.” Justification not just for the East India Company but also for Crown rule was ably demonstrated: “When it was found that government by the East India Company originally a profit-making organisation, led to an undesirable situation, the British people did not hesitate to take over the supreme responsibility of sovereign power” (Ghose 1921:118).

By 1921, the notion of a commonwealth was emerging in its very nascent form, as “the very expression of ‘Empire’ is out of date. Germany was an Empire and so was Rome, but Great Britain is ever tending to become a federation, a community of nations, of peoples under one flag. In this type of Empire there is not as in other past Empires of Europe, any idea of assimilation of the weaker to the stronger, of the East to the West. But as in the Hindu ‘Samrajya’ of old, each nation, each race is left free to develop into greater manhood like special culture it has acquired or inherited in conformity with the principles of self-government, freedom, and liberty. In other words, this British Empire does not stand for any enforced unity or standardisation of its various parts, but for a fuller, richer, and multifarious life among each of the peoples that compose it for the glorification of their common humanity. Is it not an ideal worth thinking and working for, living, and dying for?” (Ghose 1921:129–30).

The importance of public health and culture emerged only after 1858. Here, Ghose called for the cooperation of the Indians as being essential: “If the progress of sanitation in rural areas leaves much to be desired, that is due not only to the lack of funds, but the habits of our own people are also to blame. Our compatriots find it difficult to get over their old deep-seated prejudices and the lax ways of life into which they had fallen” (Ghose 1921:99–100). He provided an optimistic report that India continued to benefit from the scientific advancement in medicine. The Lady Dufferin Association, founded in 1888, was reported to be immensely successful in providing medical aid to women and children. The promotion of European literature and science among the native Indian population had progressed well. The College of Science in Calcutta and of Bombay and the Tata Research Institute of Bangalore, “all three owe their existence to the munificence of patriotic Indians of great eminence either in Law or in Industry or Commerce” (Ghose 1921:111). A fact which he lamented, however, was that most of the recently educated and literate Indians always sought to become lawyers (Ghose 1921:112). There was hope that advancement in Indian archaeology would assist the “British to respect our past” (Ghose 1921:113), a throwback to the Victorian sensibility of the late 19th century.

Railways became the vehicle for communicating colonial ideology of moral and material progress across the Indian space. While the military and the civilian population hailed the emergence of the railways, restrictions were placed on the differentiated travel

arrangements between the imperialist and native travelers. The segmentation of a race and a class system remained a major issue, thereby reinforcing the subject, second-class status of Indians versus the rest. It reinforced the binarism between the colonized and the colonizer. How far was the colonial state implicit in reinforcing the underdevelopment of regional spaces in India? There is unambiguous evidence of a monopoly in the colonial-sanctioned historiographical and geographical discourses to reinforce the patterns of material and moral progression in India (Kumar 2007). The question is whether improvement was a preserve of the British. It does not seem so, as the material improvements over time spread across the length and breadth of India. This came about largely because the cost of maintaining these enormous material improvements became a financial drag as years progressed and it was deemed pragmatic to allow the use of the key material services beyond the immediate military to include civilians. This was particularly visible when civilians were allowed to use the railways for pilgrimage, thereby helping defray the costs of maintenance. There was also active engagement by prominent Indian entrepreneurs in financing key infrastructural projects in this period. At the same time, there were areas which remained underdeveloped despite increased connectivity, especially the northeastern regions, as well as the remote islands of Andaman and Nicobar (Vaidik 2010). The colonial legacy of focusing on the 16 major states of India has continued to this day, at the expense of communities inhabiting these peripheral regions. This helped perpetuate secessionist tendencies, violence, and disconnectedness to the larger body of the Indian state.

The material progression saw the shift from a *curative* to an entirely *preventative* medical policy in the colonies. This can be seen in the Sanitary Commission Reports, which sought to manage the "preventive" policies by the spatial and moral ordering of colonial spaces (Kumar 2002). This was reflected in the regulation of prostitution, of the lunatic asylums, or pilgrim controls, abattoir controls in urban landscapes, and of course the suppression of "criminal tribes," or "Thughees" and "Pindaris," of India. The economic import of these regulations cannot be underplayed in this respect. This also helped to reinforce the structuring of the colonial society.

The rise of imperial science and technology and its adaptation across the colonies became well established. This was reflected in the major enterprises associated with botanical gardens, of economic geology. The appointment of a keeper of East India Company was recorded in 1771. This volume follows the time-honored tradition led by Sir George C. M. Birdwood, an Anglo-Indian naturalist who published his report on the old records of the India Office (1879). In true Humboldtian tradition, encyclopedic compilations of plants, both medicinal and economic, were instigated during this period, as was the establishment of the Royal Botanical Garden in Calcutta, Saharanpur, Ootacamund, and Darjeeling, of Nopalry (a cactus garden) in 1789 by Dr. James Anderson in Madras, as well as Hookers's documentation of a century of Indian orchids. In the case of agriculture, there was development of scientific research led by surgeon-naturalists related to economic botany, such as plant genetics, agricultural chemistry, and mycology. A range of experiments relating to tea, dye-producing plants, coffee, and medicinal plants such as cinchona, and the progressive development of cotton in the region were instigated to support commercial ventures of the company and the empire.

Detailed investigations into recurring famines in India from 1769 onwards in the three Presidencies of Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay were commissioned. The importance of trade in timber and its exploitation was a keen concern during this period to fuel the material development of shipping and railway enterprises in India and abroad. The diversity of animals in India was investigated with great scientific pragmatism. At the same time, the sanction for the destruction of 5,673 tigers in the Bengal Presidency between 1822 and 1824 is quite revealing. The 18th-century preoccupation with natural history saw the development of geology in India, from seismology to paleontology, and meteorology to stratigraphy. The exploitation of coal, iron ore, and oil reserves, on the one hand, and the competition for naming of uncharted territories in India, on the other, became quite frequent during this period.

Acclimatization to the Indian subcontinent was a major preoccupation, and this led to the development of the exact science of meteorology. Here, the interrelations between the devastating cyclone of 1864 in Bengal and the consequent famines in Orissa in 1866 were well established and documented. Both the physical effects of climate and of astronomical observations were well organized. The registration of the ozone in Bombay was set up as early as 1863. The obsession with the role of the environment in determining the cause and effect of disease resulted in the documentation of “medical topography” since 1820 across the key provinces of India. This follows the ideas promoted by James Lind ([1768] 2012), A. MacDougall (1825), and James R. Martin’s (1837) classics on Calcutta, thereby extending the debates on human acclimatization by David N. Livingstone (1987, 1999). This has been adeptly demonstrated by entries on health and disease. As Mark Harrison (1999) notes, the ensuing debate between environmental determinism and progress in the empire has never been fully resolved. Medical topography, lock hospitals, sanatoriums, and sanitary measures were key concerns during this period both in civilian and military establishments and in towns. Translating science to the community has been a challenge when confronting superstitions and cultural prejudices. We do find evidence of Dr. Christian being removed from the services for forcing the people of Kullu to submit to vaccination in 1860. Up until the 1830s, vernacular medicine was accepted by the colonial authorities to remain a supplement to Western medicines. This, however, changed after 1857.

This also brought into focus the key issues relating to the indigenous hakim/unani system of medicine versus Western medicines. We see the emergence of private/public partnerships through charities in dealing with major relief operations after an epidemic. The idea of an idiot hospital, of providing surveillance metal tags, was also widely debated and used in the empire after 1856. Medical education therefore formed a major part of educating and of translating science across the community most vulnerable to key health issues. Controlling the large water resource was critical for maintaining the imperatives of trade and revenue for the empire. The large-scale program of engineering works undertaken by the Public Works Department is a case in point. The emergence of hydroelectric projects, of sustained intervention of irrigation and hydraulic projects, thereby transforming the landscape in modern-day India and Pakistan, is well documented. Scientific analysis of diverse race tribes and caste groups was organized and documented at a regional level. Here, the use of photographs and ethnographic documentation helped in coming to grips with the

vast and complex population of India. We find documentation of “rude” tribes (Axelby and Nair 2010:233, 235) of the northeastern frontier of India, along with the diverse dialects, languages, customs, and manners of these tribes and castes. Finally, topography and landscape surveys were confined to magnetic surveys, mapping the physical geography and meteorology of the Himalayan region. Geographical and statistical reports became the standard bearer of critical information for policy and planning (Axelby and Nair 2010).

Indeed, the liberal project receded into the background after 1857, with the establishment of direct rule as a Crown colony. The question remained as to what happened to the moral justification by the Liberals after 1857, especially when the emphasis was shifted back to the traditional despotic landed elites (Metcalf 1964). The perceived status quo was not an option, given that Europe was already embroiled in a major democratization of the polity, with the rise of nascent nationalism, and the extension of the franchise. Indeed, moral justifications were never accidental or whimsical in the colonial era. They were deliberate, despite the subtlety of liberal endeavors.

In this age of imperialism, Henry. S. Maine (1822–1888) challenged the currency of forceful introduction of ideas of progress and enlightenment in India. He wanted the traditional, idyllic village society to be left alone and vehemently opposed the encroachment of modern enlightened institutions across indigenous territories. While the liberal pedagogical project was roundly criticized in the wake of the rise of nationalist and anti-imperial historiography in India, what is evident in the postcolonial period is that institutions set in place by the liberal projects, such as a free press, an impartial judiciary, and a continuation of rule of law and democracy, have strengthened participation of citizens in asserting their claims on the future of India’s development. This was advocated through the assertion of new jurisprudence in place of customary laws initiated through the colonial period, which was amply documented over time in the material and moral progress of the empire; thus, capitalism enshrined in the imperial endeavors of European powers came to facilitate the gradual transformation and emergence of criminal justice and of private property rights from ancient usufruct entitlements. Maine, as an ardent critic of the material and moral progress as advocated by the liberal and utilitarian members of the empire, endeavored to highlight the profound consequences this would have on the traditional societies of India. Colonial modernity created serious ruptures in these societies which changed forever.

Here again, we see ideas of Orientalists such as Sir William Jones being advanced by Maine, bringing him into confrontation with the utilitarians and the evangelicals about what was right for the natives in India, eventually culminating in direct rule by the Crown after 1857 (Mantena 2010). “The liberal and anti-liberal views gave rise to the different ideologies of empire” (Chatterjee 2011:691). In all, both the anti-liberal and liberal views normalized traditional Indian society in need of change, thereby discounting the specific aspects of their spatiality or location. This also reinforced the superiority of Western society and, by extension, the imperial rule. The exceptionalism of colonial rule was reinforced in these material and moral projects. Indeed, liberalism never faded from memory and policy (Chatterjee 2011:691). Imperial governance was tailored for different regions depending on the level of progress, so what was true of the Bombay Presidency

did not necessarily extend to the Bhils of Central Provinces or the Nagas of NEFA (Zou and Kumar 2010).

CONCLUSION

We can state that the colonial project of modernization remained incomplete and fractured, especially in the marginal areas of the empire. These areas came under the policy of “Paternalism,” which remained in place even in the postcolonial period (Nag and Kumar 2002). This brings me to the question of whether postcolonial interpretation can be nonideological. Postcolonial theorists have over time become apologetic of the past and have reached an impasse towards future agenda. Indeed, claiming change can only be addressed by reclaiming continuity across colonial and postcolonial episteme. This presents agonies of the real (Gordon 2012) in an unequal world. Optimism about the ideas of progress received a rude jolt with the World Wars (1914–1918 and 1932–1945). Today in the age of the Anthropocene, the idea of progress has degenerated to reiterate the catastrophic consequences of human greed to place themselves at the middle and center of all activities. Progress, indeed, has never been constant or automatic, nor inevitable as the laws of cosmology (Kumar 2024).

NOTE

1. See also Mr. Grant’s “State of the Society” excerpts from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company. General Appendix to Report from Select Committee, 1831–32, VIII, 20–111.

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Displacement, Social Justice, and the Right to the City: A Review and Critical Reflections in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to review the literature and themes relating to displacement, social justice, and the right to the city in the 21st century. Displacement, in its various forms, is central to understanding the human rights abuses and livelihood implications when urban rights are revoked, forcing inhabitants to the periphery, and is the focus of this paper. Whereas the city's services, resources, and opportunities should be a collective right advanced by local authorities for all who occupy urban space, displacements lead to resettlement and impoverishment, especially as livelihoods are disrupted. Urban renewal, through mega-projects, clean-up campaigns, and speculative gentrification processes, violates human rights when the poor are displaced in the periphery. Such displacements are often a product of the neoliberal assault. There are social justice, economic, and cultural implications as their urban rights are revoked. The focus on rights is partly owed to philosophers such as Henri Lefebvre and geographers such as David Harvey who have pioneered works on the right to the city and social justice, respectively. The struggle for social justice can be viewed as a moral claim for the realization and advancement of human rights in the city.

KEY WORDS Displacement; Social Justice; Urban Rights; Resettlement; Impoverishment

The disintegration of authoritarian dictatorships in 1989–1990 and the subsequent transformation of the geopolitical global order brought issues of democracy and human rights to the fore. Any discussion of human rights and urban (or rural) space inevitably raises questions of ethics, morality, and social justice. There is a view that to realize its “potential as a scholarly discipline examining the human condition, . . . geography needs

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to focus on human rights. . . . Likewise, the study of human rights . . . needs the nuanced sensitivity of geography” (Honey 2004:732). The concern of progressive, critical geographers with social justice (Harvey 1973; Smith 1994), morality and ethics (Smith 2000), and law (Blomley 1994) implicitly has a human rights orientation.

Investment decisions, zoning, politics, urban diversity, and class cultures continually transform the city’s sociospatial structure and present several challenges, including inequality, human rights violations, exclusion, dispossession, uneven development, segregation, forced displacement, and resettlement. Onyebueke et al. (2020:1) described forced eviction as a “global humanitarian crisis.” The extent of forced removals has resulted in an unprecedented number of displaced people.

Although the implications of development-induced displacement have become increasingly evident, the extent of displacement has worsened in the 21st century. With the unprecedented volume of infrastructure development, especially in cities of the Global South, the risk of population displacement and resettlement is exacerbated. Whereas the last two decades of the 20th century (1980s and ‘90s) saw the displacement of approximately 10 million persons per decade, recent estimations were said to reach 20 million per decade by 2020 (Cernea and Maldonado 2018).

Displacement in its various forms is central to understanding the human rights abuses and livelihood implications when urban rights are revoked, forcing inhabitants to the periphery, and is the focus of this paper. More specifically, the aim of this paper is to provide a review of the literature and themes relating to displacement, social justice, and the right to the city in the 21st century. A key contention is that displacements are unjust because of the resettlement and impoverishment likely to occur when sustainable livelihoods are disrupted. Those forcibly resettled do not benefit from projects that lead to their displacement (Vanclay 2017). Instead, they experience impoverishment as they lose the social, economic, and cultural resources that previously sustained them (Ichwatus Sholihah and Shaojun 2018; Patel, Sliuzas, and Mathur 2015).

The publication of Harvey’s (1973) book *Social Justice and the City* served as a catalyst for more critical approaches to analyze urban development and to promote the struggle for social justice and rights in the city. The right to the city and social justice approaches recognize the struggle of urban citizens to access and appropriate urban space regardless of class or economic status (Marcuse 2012). However, contestations and struggles have been disrupted by the neoliberal policies that have exacerbated marginalization and social exclusion and have restricted the rights of the poor in the city. Such rights include, for example, human dignity, access to essential services like health and education, inclusion in decision-making, information, employment, freedom from displacement or eviction, and a safe and healthy environment.

This paper is divided into five sections. The first focuses on accumulation by dispossession associated with neoliberalism. Social justice and the right to the city is the theme of the second section. The third section assesses various conceptualizations of development-induced displacement. Resistance to forced resettlement is the theme of the fourth section. The final section focuses on forced resettlement and policy options.

NEOLIBERALISM: “ACCUMULATION BY DISPOSSESSION”

Neoliberal structural policies eschew state welfare interventions, entrench private property rights, and promote free trade and liberal markets, which would apparently create conditions that would elevate human well-being by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills. The counter view is that neoliberalism has done little to alleviate poverty but instead has created an unregulated capitalist system which favors the elite and dispossesses the poor (Harvey 2003b, 2005). This is what Harvey (2003b) has termed *accumulation by dispossession*.

Accumulation by dispossession and creative destruction are evident in the restructuring and transformation of urban spheres (Harvey 2007b). More specifically, *neoliberal urbanisms* are viewed as the transference of laissez-faire market capital into the sociospatial spheres of the urban domain (Rossi and Alberto 2015). Such practices are enacted through public-private partnerships to govern and extract wealth from a redeveloped city (Weber 2002).

Harvey’s (1989) seminal work on cities was the first of its kind to identify the neoliberal governance of urban space. The shift of urban governance from managerialism to entrepreneurialism facilitated rent-seeking in the city. Furthermore, political and decision-making roles shift from local authorities to the elites within the entrepreneurial city. In such instances, urban policies reform to suit the elite instead of addressing the needs of citizens.

Moreover, the adoption of neoliberal policies in cities of the Global South has resulted in a vast majority of regions succumbing to the destructive nature of the neoliberal regime. As such, creating gentrified spaces, for example, has destroyed cultural norms, livelihood social networks, and political structures (Harvey 2007a; Rossi and Alberto 2015).

In the quest for world-class status in the 21st century, many cities continue to promote policies that lead to increasing inequalities, dispossession, and displacement, and the urban poor become expendable (Bristol 2018; Haas 2020; Leon 2017). Against the background of increasing impacts and consequences of neoliberal policies, there has been increased focus on social justice and rights in the city.

DISPLACEMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND RIGHTS TO THE CITY

Social justice approaches have emphasized the need to advance human rights in the city (Domaradzka 2018). Both approaches reinforce one another, as the right to the city is also the right to a just and equal society (Mair and Duffy 2015; Mitchell 2003; Purcell 2002). The seminal works of Henri Lefebvre ([1968] 1996) and David Harvey (1973) have influenced the right to the city and social justice discourses, respectively. The rights to the city include (regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, or status of citizenship, etc.):

1. habitation (equal access to the city and its resources),
2. participation (in decision-making and shaping the city), and

3. appropriation (recognizing the city's social value and experiencing the fullness of city life; Harvey 2003a; Lefebvre [1968] 1996).

Lefebvre ([1968] 1996) argued that it is increasingly necessary to affirm the right not to be excluded from the city when urban transformations occur. The city should be appropriated not only by the masters of privilege but also by the masses relegated to the peripheries and ghettos (Lefebvre [1968] 1996).

The year 2018 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *The Right to the City*. As neoliberal development projects proliferate in recent years, the right to the city has made “a comeback as a rallying cry” (Schissel 2012:42). The right to the city has featured prominently in urban social movements in both the Global North and South to contest development-induced displacement (DID) and to advocate for social justice. Various alliances, campaigns, and coalitions challenge urban commodification because such transformations tend to revoke rights and displace the urban poor (Marcuse 2012; Mayer 2012; Schmid 2012).

For example, mega-events are touted as neoliberal strategies for economic growth and worldwide recognition for cities in the Global South. However, such events have significant socioeconomic consequences (Müller 2015). In the buildup to hosting major sporting events, cities introduce neoliberal mega-projects to clean up and restructure the urban environment (Maharaj 2017, 2023; Vives Miró 2011). Such projects simultaneously revoke rights through DID (Mair and Duffy 2015; Shin 2018; Smith 2014), and those affected struggle to retain their right to the resources in the city.

Lefebvre ([1968] 1996:156) stated, “The right to the city is like a cry and a demand.” The cry and demand are out of necessity for the proletariat to equally access and appropriate the resources and opportunities found in city spaces. The right is therefore to equal access to essential services, health and education, freedom from discrimination, affordable housing, equality, inclusion in decision-making, citizenship, information, employment, accessibility, sustainable development, a safe and healthy environment, and freedom from displacement or evictions (Marcuse 2012).

Lefebvre ([1968] 1996) was vague about how the right to the city would be realized, however (Schmid 2012). The right to the city “is not a natural right, nor a contractual one” (Lefebvre [1968] 1996:194) and is therefore not a legal claim enforceable by the judicial system (Huchzermeyer 2018). Instead, it is a moral claim founded on social justice in the city, a space where the social hierarchy between formal and informal, core and periphery, elite and proletariat dissipate. Such a space would incorporate freedom, democracy, equity, accessibility, and the ability for all to reproduce the city (Harvey 2003a; Marcuse 2012).

Geographers such as Brenner (Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2012), Massey (2005), and Harvey (2003a) contended that an alternative space of inclusion is possible. Marcuse (2012:33) notes that an alternative space of inclusion is achieved by “Exposing, Proposing and Politicising.” In this context, exposure relates to identifying and analyzing the challenges in urban areas and making those problems known to relevant authorities. Proposing entails collaboration with affected parties to identify solutions to the recognized difficulties. Lastly, politicizing includes identifying the political implications of the

exposed challenges and proposed solutions. This phase pays close attention to the political aspects of the potential strategy of implementation (Marcuse 2012).

This would produce a transformed urban space, which revokes displacement and promotes inclusion, social justice, acceptance, and equal appropriation; however, social justice and rights are continually contested by authorities who advance macroeconomic policies at the expense of the urban poor. Such practices create uneven development (Smith 1982) and revoke urban rights, displacing the poor and destroying previously sustainable livelihoods provided in the city (Butler and Aicher 2015; Maharaj 2017, 2023; Watt 2013).

Forced relocation, or development-induced displacement and resettlement (DIDR), has two different but related processes: *displacement* and *resettlement*. The latter constitutes the “process by which those adversely affected [by displacement] are assisted in their efforts to improve, or at least to restore, their incomes and living standards” (World Bank 2015:2). Hence, forced resettlement is the act of displacement combined with struggles to restore the livelihoods of those displaced. Forced resettlement occurs when (1) land is expropriated for developmental purposes, (2) people are in the “right-of-way” or footprint of a mega-project, or (3) new developments threaten to harm surrounding populations (Vanclay 2017).

Some scholars argue that the focus on DIDR has been in rural areas, especially displacement related to dams (Rogers and Wilmsen 2020; Roquet et al. 2017). DIDR in cities is underresearched, and the impacts of urban resettlement remain relatively unexplored (Ichwatus Sholihah and Shaojun 2018; Roquet et al. 2017). This knowledge gap has led to limitations in existing resettlement policies, and frameworks need to be revised to address urban DIDR (Choi 2015; Koenig 2014, 2018).

Displacements are unjust because of the forced resettlement and the impoverishment that are likely to occur. Those who are forcibly resettled do not benefit from projects that led to their displacement. Instead, they experience impoverishment as they lose the social, economic, and cultural resources that previously sustained them (Ichwatus Sholihah and Shaojun 2018; Patel et al. 2015).

These development projects epitomize social exclusion through physical and economic displacement (Grier and Grier 1978; Marcuse 1985). Cernea (2004) argued that social justice, equity norms, entitlements, and human rights should be paramount when development projects negatively affect vulnerable groups. As a result, various international finance institutions (IFIs) developed safeguard policies to identify and mitigate forced resettlement risks.

Urban geographers, planners, and sociologists have attempted to conceptualize the various types of displacement associated with urban development.

CONCEPTUALIZING DEVELOPMENT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

Displacement has many meanings, occurs in different contexts, and has wide-reaching consequences. The notion of displacement, and its various forms, is central to understanding the livelihood implications when urban rights are revoked, forcing inhabitants to the periphery. Initially, Grier and Grier (1978) argued that displacement

occurred in two primary ways: physical and economic. Chernoff (1980) viewed social displacement as the dislocation and subsequent replacement of one group by another.

In calling for a more extensive view of displacement, Marcuse (1985) argued for the need to look beyond the direct forms of dislocation. He contended that this was too narrow a definition and there was a need to expand the notion to include various types of displacement that occurred under urban restructuring, and he argued that urban displacement occurred in four instances, including (1) direct last-resident displacement, (2) direct chain displacement, (3) exclusionary displacement, and (4) pressure displacement.

In the literature, residents' physical displacement has been overemphasized, with little attention given to attachment to space and what the dislocation from place entails. In recognizing this, Davidson (2008) reconceptualized displacement to include both direct and indirect impacts. Such displacement-related effects include (1) indirect economic displacement, (2) community displacement, and (3) neighborhood resource displacement. Table 1 provides an overview of the conceptualizations presented by Marcuse (1985) and Davidson (2008).

Following the initial conceptualization by Marcuse (1985) and reconceptualization of displacement by Davidson (2008), there have been attempts to elucidate different forms of dislocation. Martin (2007) focused on *political displacement*, which transpires when residents are politically marginalized and outnumbered by newcomers. This occurs through the hierarchal shift that accompanies a regenerated area. In other words, political power transfers from one group to another, and influence is displaced from the poor and retained by the elite (Betancur 2002). Political displacement relates to Davidson's (2008) community displacement (Table 1).

Table 1. Conceptualizing Displacement—Marcuse and Davidson

Marcuse (1985)	Davidson (2008)
<p>1. <i>Direct last-resident displacement</i>, informed by Grier and Grier (1978), refers to residents' physical or economic displacement. Physical displacement occurs, for example, when landlords turn off the central heating within housing units, thereby forcefully evicting individuals. Economic displacement may occur because of excessive rental increases. Marcuse (1985), however, argued that both physical and financial disarticulation are likely to coincide where only the last resident of a unit is the victim of displacement.</p>	<p>1. Indirect economic displacement is related to exclusionary displacement (Marcuse 1985). It refers to the affordability pressures which accompany development in a previously underdeveloped area. Price shadowing—where redevelopment in one location simultaneously identifies other potential regions for development through increased housing and rental pricing (Vicario and Martinez Monje 2003)—decreases affordable housing availability, leading to augmented indirect economic displacement.</p>

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Table 1. Conceptualizing Displacement—Marcuse and Davidson, concl.

Marcuse (1985)	Davidson (2008)
<p>2. <i>Direct chain displacement</i> considers the various displacements that have occurred since the physical decline of an area and includes all residents as displacement victims. Marcuse (1985) broadened the notion of displacement to include all those forced to relocate as an area physically declined.</p>	<p>2. Community displacement occurs when a city’s identity and governance are changed and there is a resultant shift in political power from the original residents to the newcomers.</p>
<p>3. <i>Exclusionary displacement</i> refers to households that can no longer access previously affordable housing as the area has been regenerated to cater to the elite. Here, Marcuse (1985) refers to two households: The first household relocates from the unit voluntarily and the unit is then redeveloped; the second household is one which was once able to reside within an area but no longer can because of increased property values (post-redevelopment).</p>	<p>3. Neighborhood resource displacement occurs when original residents succumb to feelings of alienation and disconnection as they no longer relate to the transformed sociopolitical state of their community.</p>
<p>4. Pressure displacement refers to urban residents resisting displacement. Such residents witness the changing sociospatial structure of their living environments. It is such changes that Marcuse (1985) argued would inevitably pressurize residents to relocate, thereby displacing them.</p>	

Note: Adapted from Marcuse (1985) and Davidson (2008).

Hyra (2015) argued that *political* and *cultural displacement* are interrelated, as the latter produces feelings of alienation amongst original residents who are forced to move. Political and cultural displacement result in the original residents feeling resentful toward, and alienated by, newcomers.

Drawing inspiration from Davidson (2008, 2009), Stabrowski (2014:794) described *everyday displacement* as “the ongoing loss of the agency, freedom, and security to ‘make place.’” In a similar vein, Butcher and Dickens (2016) talk of *affective displacement*, Atkinson (2015) talks of *symbolic displacement*, and Valli (2015) refers to a *sense of displacement*. Such forms of displacement all relate to the sense of loss which occurs when residents can resist physical removal but experience inequality and discomfort

accompanying the fight to remain in a redeveloping area (Atkinson 2015; Butcher and Dickens 2016; Valli 2015). Such dislocation primarily relates to community displacement (Davidson 2008). These forms of dislocation are indirect in that physical movement does not occur.

Kern (2016) introduced the notion of *temporal displacement* as the privileging of specific landscapes, which inevitably results in the marginalization, exclusion, and displacement of certain groups and their needs.

Zuk et al. (2017) argue that *residential displacement* is direct and forced, attributing it to *forced displacement*. Forced displacement refers to the involuntary relocation of residents from their established communities and neighborhoods and could be physical (evictions), economic (livelihood disruptions), or exclusionary (beautification strategies). A good example would be urban lands cleared for FIFA- (Federation Internationale de Football Association) or IOC- (International Olympics Committee) related infrastructure projects that forcibly displaced countless communities in the emerging economies of Beijing, Seoul, Athens, New Delhi, South Africa, Brazil, and Russia (Broudehoux 2019; COHRE 2007; Foxall 2014; Maharaj 2015; Talbot and Carter 2018).

Governments form public-private partnerships to facilitate mega-project developments required for such events. Additionally, beautification campaigns disguise poverty in the quest to create world-class cities. The combination of mega-projects (stadiums, sports venues, transport networks, hotels and accommodation, and entertainment facilities) and beautification strategies were responsible for challenging rights and displacing and excluding countless citizens, mostly the urban poor (Corrarino 2014; de Oliveira 2020; Gauthier and Alford 2020; Ruggie 2016).

Those forcibly displaced include informal settlers and traders, vendors and hawkers, street children, the unemployed, the homeless, substance abusers, and sex workers (Corrarino 2014; Maharaj 2017). These persons did not fit the ideal image of a neoliberal city and were denied access to urban space. Such clean-up tactics are evident in most host countries, including those in the Global North and South (COHRE 2007; Kennelly and Watt 2011; Suzuki, Ogawa, and Inaba 2018). It is significant to note, however, that clean-up campaigns are not only tied to mega-events but are likewise evident under authoritarian regimes where the poor fall prey to the neoliberal city. This was evident in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, under Operation Murambatsvina, which targeted those living and working in the informal sector (Mazuru 2019). In less than two weeks, 700,000 urban inhabitants lost their source of employment, their homes, or both (Hammar 2017).

Displacement is mostly associated with development projects that spatially dislocate the urban poor from the city, compromise their livelihoods, and increase their risk of impoverishment. Often, the only option for the poor is to organize and mobilize to resist displacement and forced relocation to the periphery.

RESISTANCE TO FORCED RESETTLEMENT

Forced removals, through evictions, clean-up campaigns, and development-induced displacement, result in the “hygienization” of public space and the “violent un-homing” of vulnerable communities. Resettlement is one of the most acute forms of powerlessness, as

those removed lose control of their physical space and lose access to resources and amenities. Powerlessness, coupled with the urban poor's lack of developmental benefits, has led to increased resistance to DIDR (Hirsh, Eizenberg, and Jabareen 2020). However, because forced resettlement literature focuses mostly on the rural experience, resistance studies have focused mainly on dam-related projects (Oliver-Smith 2006), with little analyses given to urban resistance measures (Koenig 2015).

Urban resistance to forced resettlement is a political action that calls for the inclusion of affected persons in decision-making, genuine consultation, participation, and involvement in the formulation and implementation of resettlement plans. City residents are well positioned for activism because of the high density of urban areas (allowing for collective action) and residents' proximity to centers of power (Koenig 2015).

Urban resistance has taken several forms, including (1) negotiation with decision-makers about the effects of infrastructural development, (2) use of local, multisectoral, vertical, and national alliances to build and influence support for the displaced, (3) utilization of social media to gain public support, (4) activists and affected persons highlighting the human rights violations enshrined in resettlement policies, and (5) mass demonstrations placing pressure on politicians and reminding them of their constitutional obligations to their constituents (Koenig 2015).

Resistance to DIDR involves various bodies and spaces that act in solidarity to advocate for preserving livelihoods, the right to stay put, and human and property rights. Despite the policy protections for vulnerable groups, urban DIDR remains a contentious issue. Those who are displaced are resettled to the periphery and struggle to retain their rights to the city (Patel et al. 2015), a scenario all too familiar in South Africa, especially under apartheid.

FORCED RESETTLEMENT AND POLICY OPTIONS

Displacement threatens the welfare and property rights of affected persons. At the global scale, several IFIs have developed resettlement guidelines to mitigate the negative implications of forced resettlement (Drydyk 2007; Georg 2007; Terminski 2013); however, IFIs are accused of being "agents of neoliberalism" (Babb and Kentikelenis 2018), thus questioning the inherent contradictions between being profit-seekers, on the one hand, and protectors of the vulnerable, on the other. Nonetheless, where development projects require funding from IFIs, resettlement guidelines are expected to be strictly adhered to (at least in theory) to (1) mitigate the negative implications of forced resettlement and (2) facilitate measures to restore livelihoods (Vanclay 2017).

In 1980, the World Bank adopted its first policy centered on the socioeconomic impacts of forced resettlement associated with mega-projects. The World Bank's guidelines have been revised over the years and have morphed into a global benchmark which have influenced multilateral, bilateral, and state policies on forced resettlement.

These policies guide the resettlement process and recognize that displacement can be both physical (relocation or loss of shelter) and economic (lost assets or livelihood strategies; Vanclay 2017). The primary focus of all three policies is to:

- prevent displacements or, where unavoidable, to mitigate the negative impacts associated with DIDR;
- avoid forced evictions;
- engage with affected communities and provide consultation and compensation for lost assets;
- recognize that cash compensation is not enough for livelihood restoration;
- improve or restore the livelihoods of those displaced; and
 - select a resettlement site based on sociocultural compatibility and adequate resources (Asian Development Bank 2012; International Finance Corporation, 2012; World Bank 2017).

These policies advocate that livelihood restoration is fundamental to ensuring successful resettlement. Satisfactory relocation—that is, resettlement with livelihood restoration—can be realized by recognizing the rights of those who have been displaced. These include the right to information, consultation, participation, negotiation, compensation, and rehabilitation (Vanclay 2017; Van der Ploeg and Vanclay 2017).

Where displacement is unavoidable, the policies provide guidelines for developing a resettlement action plan (RAP). RAPs focus on compensation for lost assets, relocation costs, and livelihood restoration for project-affected persons (PAPs). Borrowers from the IFIs are required to employ skilled resettlement practitioners to conduct a baseline survey that determines the number of displaced persons, demographic information, assets, livelihood strategies, and vulnerable groups. Such information is required to formulate a livelihood restoration plan (Asian Development Bank 2012; International Finance Corporation 2012; World Bank 2017).

Scholars have argued that these policies lack guidelines on urban resettlement and methods to restore wage-based livelihoods, however (Koenig 2014, 2018; Roquet et al. 2017; Smyth et al. 2015). Policies to mitigate forced resettlement were first introduced for dam-related projects. In such mega-projects, PAPs were rural and relied on land-based assets and natural resources for livelihood strategies; hence, all three policies have a rural bias, focusing on land as the primary livelihood strategy (Koenig 2014, 2018). Likewise, there is a strong emphasis on restoring livelihoods that depend on common property resources and natural assets (Asian Development Bank 2012; International Finance Corporation 2012; World Bank 2017). Such resources (common property and natural) do not encompass wage-based strategies of urban inhabitants.

The city space provides refuge to the urban poor through informal occupations. Such occupations, defined as irregular, transient, and artisanal, mainly include street vending, trading, hawking, and traditional small-scale productions (Roquet et al. 2017) and are mostly overlooked by IFIs.

The World Bank pays the least attention to urban-based livelihood strategies. In addition, the IFC (2012:33) states that the resettlement policy “does not apply to impacts on livelihoods where the project is not changing the land use of the affected groups or communities.” However, in urban areas, city dwellers rely on skills and social networks for livelihood strategies. While this may be disrupted by physical displacement, the land use

remains the same (Koenig 2014); thus, the policy considers non-land-based livelihood strategies (Koenig 2018). The ADB did make some effort to incorporate language on non-land-based livelihoods, however, and stated that resettlement areas must have access to transport networks and employment opportunities (Asian Development Bank 2012).

Although all three policies specifically focus on livelihood restoration, little to no guidelines exist about how wage-based livelihoods can be restored. According to Koenig (2014), many urban resettlement projects are mostly (re)housing strategies in which livelihood restoration is overlooked. Interestingly, before resettlement, the urban poor often lack access to physical capital in the shape of formal housing. Instead, they reside in informal settlements where their location is more critical; however, when hosting mega-events, Global South cities restructure urban space for event requirements and aesthetic appeal. Slum settlements get demolished, and informal residents often relocate to formal housing on city borders (Nogueira 2019). Urban resettlement is therefore considered successful merely by the provision of housing. In peripheral locations, however, transport networks are often nonexistent or considerably expensive and employment opportunities are scarce. In such resettlement projects, livelihood rehabilitation is sacrificed for formal housing (Koenig 2014, 2018).

In 2014, a symposium in South Africa focused on “resettlement and livelihoods” under the auspices of the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA). Two hundred and fifty attendees (government and private sector representatives, academics, civil society, PAPs, and IFIs) from 42 countries attended the seminar. The purpose was to identify issues in resettlement projects and to recommend solutions. Five key themes emerged:

1. Resettlement plans are failing communities.
2. There is more alignment between IFI policies and national legislation—countries are increasingly implementing resettlement legislation.
3. Livelihood restoration is inadequate and not planned or implemented effectively, and there is limited guidance for urban resettlement.
4. Skilled practitioners are the key to success—RAPs need thorough planning, and research into PAPs needs to commence as early as possible.
5. Resettlement practice is improving but requires more resources and training. (Smyth et al. 2015)

Effective resettlement is often constrained by inadequate consultation and participation, lack of political will, and policy gaps (Kabra 2018). Problems persist in resettlement projects despite the introduction of policies (Koenig 2018). Developers are not required to abide by IFI safeguard policies if they are not borrowers. Under such circumstances, developers must comply with national legislation centered on land acquisition, zoning, resettlement, and social welfare interventions (Koenig 2014).

CONCLUSION

Throughout history, cities have been synonymous with inequality and opportunity. The social-spatial characteristics of cities are primarily responsible for determining whether such a space is one of inequality or opportunity. In the urban arena, there have been some critical intellectual reflections about who has rights to the city and who is excluded. Lefebvre ([1968] 1996) argued for the equal appropriation of space and inclusion of the masses in urban transformations. This *right* is therefore not an exclusive entitlement for the elite. Instead, it includes marginalized and disenfranchised persons (Marcuse 2012).

This paper presented a review of the literature and themes relating to displacement, social justice, and the right to the city. Although the city's services, resources, and opportunities should be a collective right advanced by local authorities for all who occupy urban space (Lefebvre [1968] 1996), displacements lead to resettlement and impoverishment, especially as livelihoods are disrupted. Urban renewal, through mega-projects, clean-up campaigns, and speculative gentrification processes, violates human rights when the poor are displaced to the periphery. Such displacements are often a product of the neoliberal assault. The poor are displaced and forcefully relocated to the periphery, and there are social justice, economic, and cultural implications as their urban rights are revoked. The focus on rights is partly owed to philosophers such as Henri Lefebvre and geographers such as David Harvey, who have pioneered works on the right to the city and social justice, respectively. The struggle for social justice can be viewed as a moral claim for the realization and advancement of human rights in the city.

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Economic Development in Legacy Cities: Current and Emerging Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

As manufacturing employment has declined in the traditional manufacturing regions over the past decades, many communities have experienced population loss and overall economic decline. Local economic development professionals have had to grapple with long-term structural changes in the economy as well as short-term jolts. To gain insights into the changing landscape of economic development, we interviewed economic development practitioners in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. The interviews focused on their perception of current and emerging challenges and opportunities with respect to economic development in their respective communities. Having identified the major challenges and opportunities, we asked them to articulate the strategies employed to respond to these. We also asked them to comment about whether the COVID-19 pandemic had fundamentally altered their long-term approaches to economic development. While the interviews revealed challenges and opportunities that were unique to each place, some common themes were also identified.

KEY WORDS Legacy Cities; Economic Development; Economic Development Waves; COVID-19

Economic development policy and practice in the United States have evolved and changed over the past one hundred years from an emphasis on attracting investment by offering companies economic incentive packages to a more multifaceted and nuanced approach that

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emphasizes the importance of supporting and nurturing existing companies, developing and operationalizing partnerships and collaborations, and enhancing local quality of life. All communities across the United States engage in the practice of economic development, and arguably, nowhere are the stakes higher than in the traditional manufacturing communities of the American Rust Belt.¹ For a variety of reasons, communities in these regions have seen their manufacturing bases erode, their populations shrink, and their tax bases decline (Shetty and Reid 2014). In addition to the challenges that have been endemic for decades, these communities more recently faced the unforeseen challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (Chopra and Sobel 2020; Florida, Rodríguez-Pose, and Storper 2021).

Our purpose in this paper is to explore and understand current economic development practices in seven communities in four Rust Belt states—Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. These are states whose communities have been at the forefront of developing economic policies and practices that are relevant to the 21st-century economy. Given their recent (and not so recent) economic challenges, these so-called legacy cities arguably have the most to gain and the most to lose from getting it (or not getting it) right with respect to economic development policies and practices. We are particularly interested in how long-term structural changes as well as short-term challenges, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, have affected the economic development policies and practices of these communities. Although these communities differ along a number of characteristics such as population size, we were interested in identifying themes common across the communities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PRACTICE IN THE UNITED STATES

In June 1926, 22 industrial bureau managers of chambers of commerce from around the country attended a conference in Washington, DC. Organized by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, this was the first formal meeting of economic development professionals in the United States. Such was the value of the meeting that the group continued to meet and, as attendance gradually increased, the need for a formal organizational structure was recognized. On April 15, 1930, the American Industrial Development Council was established. Topics covered at these early meetings included industrial surveys, community advertising campaigns and their relationship to community development, financing new industry, manufacturing location decision-making, and regional cooperation. With one exception, these early meetings were held in Washington, DC; it was not until 1955, when attendance numbers were sufficiently robust, that the council began rotating the annual meetings between cities. At its 1960 meeting, attended by over 800 people, the council issued *A Handbook on Industrial Development* (Denn and Webb 2000). In 1980, the council changed its name to the American Economic Development Council (Shelton, Birkhead, and Seal 2000), and in 2001, it merged with the Council for Urban Economic Development to form the International Economic Development Council (IEDC; IEDC n.d.). Today, the IEDC has more than 4,300 members and its annual conference serves as a venue where economic development practitioners can share ideas and learn about the

latest issues, trends, and practices in economic development. The IEDC also provides training courses and offers certification programs that allow the successful candidate to become either a Certified Economic Developer (CEcD) or an Entrepreneurship Development Professional (EDP).²

Over the years, economic development policy and practice have changed and evolved. In the remainder of this section, we describe the evolution of economic development policies and practices from the early 20th century to the present, couching them in terms of *waves* of economic development strategies. The extant literature on economic development practice recognizes four such waves, discussed below and outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. The Four Waves of Economic Development Strategies

Wave	Overarching Theme	Strategies
First Early 20th century–present	Business attraction	Business incentives Tax abatements/credits Tax increment financing Grants Low-cost loans Relocation assistance Infrastructure improvements Free land Subsidized buildings Utility rate reduction Special assessment districts Enterprise zones Employee screening Regulatory flexibility Zoning/permit assistance
Second 1980s–present	Business retention and expansion	Business surveys Business roundtables Local business publicity programs Ombudsman programs Revolving loan funds Worker training support Technical assistance Technology transfer Export-development assistance Buy-local programs
Third 1990s–present	Partnerships and collaborations	Public-Private partnerships Regional collaboration Triple helix Industrial clusters

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Table 1. The Four Waves of Economic Development Strategies, concl.

Wave	Overarching Theme	Strategies
Fourth 2000–present	Quality of life and placemaking	Housing Education (K–12) Childcare Downtown revitalization Neighborhood revitalization Mixed-use developments Historic preservation Public gathering places Streetscapes Multiple transportation options Walkability Broadband-enabled Recreation and green spaces Locally owned businesses

Sources: Bradshaw and Blakely (1999); Chapin (2012); Deller (2021); Loh et al. (2022); Wyckoff (2014); Zheng and Warner (2010).

First-Wave Economic Development Strategies

First-wave strategies are dominated by what some have termed *smokestack chasing*. Here, the objective is to attract new investment by offering a company an incentive package to entice it to locate a facility in a particular community and/or state (Bradshaw and Blakely 1999). Incentives are typically used to entice a firm to move a facility from one state to another or to entice a firm opening a new facility to locate it in a particular state. Incentives often include tax abatements and significant public investment in infrastructure and public services, such as site development and worker training in support of the investment (Deller 2021; Hickey and Hickey 2021). Early examples of first-wave policies include the Balance Agriculture with Industry program, the 1929 brainchild of the mayor of Columbia, Mississippi, Hugh Lawson White. White employed the services of a Chicago-based industrial relocation firm, which helped him entice Reliance Manufacturing Company, a maker of men’s dress shirts and pajamas, to open a plant in Columbia. In exchange for Reliance locating to Columbia, the city guaranteed \$85,000 to cover factory construction costs (Lester 2004). Indeed, southern states were early adopters of first-wave strategies and, during the 1950s and 1960s, successfully lured many northern manufacturers to relocate to the South with the promise of cheap nonunion labor, inexpensive land, and low taxes. Northern states fought back, however, and started utilizing first-wave strategies themselves (Ross and Friedman 1990). By the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, the impact of globalization started to be felt and many American manufacturers were lured to make their products in places such as Mexico, Bangladesh, and Taiwan. In 1979, an influential report by David L. Birch of MIT showed that that relocation of manufacturing establishments from one state to another made a negligible contribution to employment growth (Birch 1979). In contrast, start-up businesses and the expansion of existing

businesses were responsible for 80%–90% of new jobs created in most states (Ross and Friedman 1990). In addition to the challenge from countries with cheap labor, advanced economies such as Japan and Germany were outpacing the United States in critical areas such as workforce quality, technology, and new product development (Ross and Friedman 1990). These realities led to the emergence of second-wave strategies.

Second-Wave Economic Development Strategies

With the realization that first-wave strategies were insufficient in a changing economy, second-wave strategies started to emerge. Second-wave strategies represented a shift in focus away from attracting outside investment to retaining and expanding existing companies (Bradshaw and Blakely 1999). Business retention and expansion programs became increasingly common. Specific strategies included offering technical assistance and workforce training programs to companies, assisting budding entrepreneurs in their efforts to start businesses, and providing export-development assistance to interested companies (Deller 2021; Ross and Friedman 1990; Zheng and Warner 2010). During the 1980s, more than one hundred public investment funds were created “to close the capital gaps discovered in state financial markets” (Ross and Friedman 1990:4). Local economic development officials invested time in conversations with companies, thus gaining a better understanding of the companies’ needs (Deller 2021). Collectively, these strategies were designed to create an economic environment where the necessary human, technological, and financial infrastructure that supported the activities of both entrepreneurs and existing companies alike was available (Ross and Friedman 1990). Despite these efforts, many economic development officials came to recognize that although second-wave strategies had resulted in some successes, they were not sufficiently transformational. In other words, outcomes fell short of expectations. The programs at the forefront of second-wave strategies were often insufficiently resourced and were fragmented in their delivery (Ross and Friedman 1990). Although second-wave approaches were distinctly different from first-wave approaches, they had one critical characteristic in common: Both were designed, financed, and operationalized by government agencies.

Third-Wave Economic Development Strategies

Third-wave approaches embrace a considerably more holistic view of regional economic development; the strategic imperative is to enhance the capacity of the entire local economy, thereby creating an economic environment more attractive to local and outside investors alike. A key feature of the shift from second-wave strategies was the “move away from government as sole service provider, instead using limited government finances and authority to engage other public and private institutions in meeting development needs” (Ross and Friedman 1990:7). Establishing a “supportive economic development marketplace” was the goal of third-wave strategies (Bradshaw and Blakely 1999:230).

Partnership and collaboration became a key organizing principle for third-wave approaches. For example, if there were a need for worker training, the second-wave response would be the establishment of a government program to supply this need. In

contrast, in a third-wave ecosystem, skill-deficient businesses/industries would work together to identify their training needs and then would work with the appropriate government agency to identify private and/or public education providers who could then bid to provide the training (Ross and Friedman 1990). Under third-wave approaches, the government serves more as a facilitator and broker, rather than as a direct supplier. Although government subsidies might be required to purchase the required training services, this new solution proved more efficient than second-wave approaches.

Some of the most popular third-wave approaches are the numerous cluster-based initiatives that emerged out of the work of Michael Porter at Harvard University. Porter (2000:15) defines clusters as “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (e.g., universities, standards agencies, trade associations) in a particular field that compete but also cooperate.” Cluster-based development is based on the premise that a company (and its region) can realize higher levels of competitiveness when it looks beyond its own limited capacity and strategically partners with other companies and support institutions to address challenges and solve problems that it is unable to solve when operating as an isolated entity. This approach encourages companies who compete to come together and identify ways in which they can cooperate to their mutual benefit. Additionally, public-sector entities, such as economic development agencies and universities, make themselves available to assist with collaborative problem-solving and solution identification. Collaboration is essential to the success of clusters and, when combined with external economies of scale, results in what Schmitz and Nadvi (1999) refer to as collective efficiency. According to Bradshaw and Blakely (1999:239), “the key to third-wave economic development programs is the identification and examination of key industry clusters specific to each region.” Using a cluster framework resulted in communities/regions building upon their unique strengths and shying away from trying to be like other communities/regions. A cluster-based approach also oriented economic development policy and practice toward “groups of firms and away from individual firms” (Cortright 2006:iv).

Closely related to industrial clusters is the triple helix model, which emphasizes the importance of university–industry–government interactions as a key to innovation in economies that are increasingly knowledge-based. Conceptually, Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff (1995) developed the triple helix model. While the traditional roles of universities (education), industry (producing and selling products), and government (regulating markets) were fairly rigid, the triple helix model suggests that the economy of a region benefits when these three areas collaborate and even take on some of the functions of the others. For example, an organizing principle of the triple helix model is that universities “will play a greater role in society as an entrepreneur” (Etzkowitz 2008:300). The emergence of business incubators and technology transfer offices on many university campuses is an indication that universities are engaging in activities beyond their core mission of education and are contributing to local economic development efforts (Calzonetti, Miller, and Reid 2012).

Collaboration between local municipalities is another example of a third-wave approach. Collaborations allow municipalities to overcome limited resource capacities

while using those resources they do have more efficiently and effectively (Lee, Feiock, and Lee 2011). St. Louis, Missouri, is a good example of a metropolitan area that was an early leader in overcoming the inefficiencies resulting from fragmented approaches to regional economic development (Fleming and Leonard 2004).

Fourth-Wave Economic Development Strategies

In his 2021 presidential address to the Southern Regional Science Association, Steven Deller of the University of Wisconsin-Madison asked the question “Are we in the fourth wave of economic development?” In the conclusion to his address, Deller (2021:223) suggested that “improving the quality of life through investing in schools, parks, and recreation, and certain types of businesses (e.g., gathering places that offer live entertainment) and quality and affordable housing will see people desiring to move into the community.” A key part of improving quality of life in a community is referred to as placemaking, and cities across the United States have incorporated placemaking into their economic strategies. Placemaking has been defined as “the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in” (Wyckoff 2014:2). For example, in announcing a new economic development strategy (Louisville Forward) for Louisville, Kentucky, in 2014, Mayor Greg Fischer stated, “[T]he old economic model said people move to where the jobs are. Now jobs locate where talented people are—and people are moving to cities where the quality of life is high” (Fischer 2014). Two fundamental concepts drive placemaking: the visual aesthetic and the social usage. The focus of the former is visual forms, while the emphasis of the latter is how people use and experience place and space (Ghavampour and Vale 2019). As noted by Loh et al. (2022), “the ultimate goal of placemaking is to create thriving, active places that people want to visit and live and work in, without pricing out current residents or making them feel unwelcome, and without losing the individuality of the place.” Although placemaking is not a new idea, its contemporary usage in the United States dates to the mid-1990s (Ghavampour and Vale 2019).

The creative class ideas of Richard Florida can also be linked to placemaking. Florida (2002, 2014) argues that the creative class is instrumental in propelling urban economies to higher levels of economic growth and prosperity. The best-performing urban areas are home to large concentrations of creative occupations such as scientists, university faculty, artists, and entertainers. High levels of demographic diversity (e.g., above-average shares of gays and lesbians) and high degrees of tolerance (e.g., as manifest in high levels of ethnic and racial integration at the neighborhood level) are also important to urban and regional economic success. Creating an environment (placemaking) that attracts and retains the creative class is beneficial to local and regional economies. Although the work of Florida has influenced public policy in many American cities, his ideas have been criticized by a number of scholars. For example, Glaeser (2004) suggests that Florida has overemphasized the importance of his bohemian and gay indexes and that, in reality, years of schooling outperforms both of these as drivers of successful cities. Others, such as Peck (2005) and Graham (2023), suggest that creative class policies contribute to gentrification and the displacement of incumbent residents (Graham 2023; McCann 2007; Peck 2005;). Indeed, Florida himself in his 2017 book, *The New Urban Crisis*, recognizes some of the

negative consequences of his creative class ideas, including gentrification, segregation, and growing socioeconomic inequalities.

This section has described the evolution of economic development thinking and practice from the early 20th century until the present day. Although thinking of this evolution in terms of different waves of economic development practice is useful, it is important to note that the appearance of a “new” wave has not signaled the end of a previous set of strategies (Osgood, Opp, and Bernotsky 2012). Rather, it has indicated a shift in emphasis. Interviews with economic development officials across 16 states conducted in the early 1990s revealed that states were scaling back on (not jettisoning) first-wave programs and increasing their emphasis on second- and third-wave programs. In other words, communities typically utilize strategies associated with all four waves. For example, with regard to first-wave strategies, practitioners noted that they continue to use incentives to compete for a major investment when an appropriate opportunity presents itself (Bradshaw and Blakely 1999).

DEINDUSTRIALIZATION AND STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Deindustrialization and *structural change* are terms that have become synonymous with the economic realignments that have occurred in a large number of communities, both large and small, in the American Rust Belt, a region comprising a handful of states bordering the Great Lakes (Alder, Lagakos, and Ohanian 2014). Between 1980 and 2014, the number of manufacturing jobs in the United States fell from 18.9 million to 12.2 million, a reduction of more than 35% (Muro and Kulkarni 2016). Most of the jobs lost were in Rust Belt states. Manufacturing’s relative share of American jobs also declined. Between 1955 and 2019, the manufacturing sector’s share of jobs decreased from 32% to 9% (Rose 2021). The absolute and relative decline in the number of manufacturing jobs has been accompanied by a concomitant rise in service-sector jobs. Today, four of five private-sector jobs are in services (Barnes, Bauer, and Edelberg 2022).

In their seminal work on deindustrialization in America, Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison (1982:6) define deindustrialization as the “widespread, systematic disinvestment in the nation’s productive capacity.” According to Child Hill and Negrey (1987), for deindustrialization to have occurred in a place or region, three conditions must be met: The place or region must (1) have experienced a structural decline in its manufacturing employment, (2) have a shrinking share of national industrial employment, and (3) experience industrial job decline that is not compensated for by employment growth in other sectors of its economy. Based upon their analysis of the economies of Great Lakes states between 1960 and 1985, Child Hill and Negrey conclude that these states undoubtedly experienced deindustrialization. Indeed, Alder et al. (2014:1) suggest, “No region of the United States fared worse over the postwar period than the ‘Rust Belt.’ ” Norton and Reese (1979:142) refer to the region as undergoing a “virtual industrial collapse,” and Russo and Linkon (2009) refer to the 1970 and 1980s as “cataclysmic” for workers in the American Rust Belt. Studies after 1985 suggest that cities in the Great Lakes states have continued to experience significant economic challenges (see, for example, Glazer and Grimes 2013, 2015; Muro, Maxim, and Whiton 2021). For example, a report

by the Greater Ohio Policy Center (2016:1) noted, “Analysis of economic health, population, and housing-related data from 2000 to 2014 paints a sobering picture of the condition of all of Ohio’s older industrial cities, with particular challenges for small and mid-sized places.”

Deindustrialization has been attributed to a variety of factors. Alder et al. (2014) suggest that a lack of competition in labor and output markets in the region’s major industries such as automotive, steel, and rubber has been a significant driver. Lack of labor-market competition is closely tied to the existence of powerful labor unions who, among other things, exerted upward pressure on manufacturing wages. With respect to output markets, the oligopolistic nature of the region’s major industries meant that they were able to stifle competition in the post-World War II period. As a result, large corporations such as General Motors, Bethlehem Steel, Goodyear, and their peers engaged in price-fixing, thus keeping competition in check and maintaining high prices for their products. These practices both discouraged investment and depressed productivity growth. The net result was the “movement of economic activity out of the Rust Belt and into other parts of the country (notably the ‘Sun Belt’ in the U.S. South)” (Alder et al. 2014:1).

Invoking the concept of the product life cycle, Norton and Reese (1979) agree with Alder et al. (2014). They suggest that “once certain conditions crystalized in a fabricating industry within the core, considerations of both cost and labor control encouraged the migration of the industry to less developed (i.e. low-wage, non-union) sites in the periphery” (Norton and Rees 1979:144). The periphery initially comprised southern states but later expanded to less-expensive labor locations overseas (Elesh 2017).

The number of manufacturing jobs has also declined as the use of industrial robots has increased (Acemoglu and Restrepo 2017). Utilization of industrial robots is unevenly spread, both by sector and by geography. The main adopter of industrial robots is the automotive industry (39% of all industrial robots in the United States), followed by the electronics industry (19%), metal products (9%), and the plastic and chemicals industries (9%; Acemoglu and Restrepo 2017). Geographically, industrial robots are concentrated in Upper Midwest and southern states. In 2015, the four states in our study had 31.9% of the industrial robots in America. In terms of state ranking, Michigan occupied the number one spot, with Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania occupying the second, fifth, and twenty-seventh spots (Muro 2017). Acemoglu and Restrepo (2017) estimate that in industries most exposed to robots, each robot replaces three workers. Overall, they estimate that the total number of U.S. jobs eliminated by the use of robots to be between 360,000 and 670,000.

Another contributor to job losses in the United States is its trade deficit with China (Mishel and Bivens 2017). As noted by Autor, Dorn, and Hanson (2013:2121), “rising imports cause higher unemployment, lower labor force participation, and reduce wages in local labor markets that house import competing manufacturing industries.” Scott and Mokhiber (2020) estimate that America’s trade deficit with China was responsible for the loss of 3.7 million American jobs between 2001 and 2018; 75.4% of these jobs were in the manufacturing sector. In terms of net jobs displaced because of the trade deficit, Pennsylvania ranks seventh, with Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana ranking eighth, tenth, and fifteenth, respectively. The sectors experiencing the largest job displacement were computers and electronic parts (1,340,600 jobs displaced); apparel and leather products

(205,700 jobs); electrical equipment, appliances, and components (165,200 jobs); fabricated metal products (193,800 jobs); and furniture and related products (146,400 jobs).

Discussing the impacts of these factors on Indiana's economy, for example, Muro et al. (2021:9) observe,

Indiana's heavy specialization in manufacturing ensured that major changes in that sector—ranging from globalization and import competition to automation—brought significant firm and worker shifts in the last two recessions. For example, between 2001 and 2019—and especially in the recessions of 2000 to 2001 and 2007 to 2009—the state lost over 72,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector, which has long been a source of above-average wages for workers without a four-year college degree.

In another study, examining the impact of manufacturing decline in Lake County, Indiana, Brady and Wallace (2001) note that the growth of service-sector jobs was insufficient to offset the decline in manufacturing jobs. New service jobs were generally low-paying, had little in the way of benefits, and offered low levels of job security. The inability of service-sector jobs to adequately replace lost manufacturing jobs has been observed across the entirety of Great Lakes states (Child Hill and Negrey 1987).

Analyzing the collapse of manufacturing employment in Michigan between 1990 and 2011, Glazer and Grimes (2013:12), note, "One of the reasons for Michigan's so-called lost decade is that the domestic auto industry was hit by the gale force of globalization and technology later than most of the nation's manufacturers."

With respect to Rust Belt cities, deindustrialization has resulted in what is termed the "hollowing-out" of local economies (Hewings et al. 1998; Jackson, Hewings, and Sonis 1989; Kotabe 1989). This occurs as an economy matures and manufacturers shift from using local suppliers to suppliers located in other regions, including overseas. This process of hollowing out sees "parts or all of some sectors disappear from the [local] economy" (Jackson et al. 1989:218), including jobs in the service sector (Child Hill and Negrey 1987). As hollowing-out gathers momentum, long-term systemic population decline occurs, resulting in the emergence of so-called shrinking cities (Beauregard 2007; Shetty and Reid 2013, 2014).

From a social perspective, the impacts of deindustrialization in Rust Belt states are wide-ranging. These include increased poverty (Brady and Wallace 2001), higher homicide rates (Matthews, Maume, and Miller 2001), and deteriorating health (Bluestone 1988). Against the backdrop of evolving economic development policies, described above as four historic waves, and the context of old industrial cities facing deindustrialization and structural change, we focus on cities in the U.S. Midwest that are relatively understudied. Much of the work on economic development policies in this region has focused mostly on large cities (e.g., Dewar and Thomas 2013; Mallach and Brachman 2013). When the focus is on individual cities, it is still usually on these large cities (e.g., Tighe and Ryberg-Webster 2019).

The case for studying small and medium-sized cities in this region rests on several characteristics that distinguish them from their larger counterparts. For example, many small and medium-sized cities in this region lack large anchor institutions, such as corporate headquarters, research universities, and research hospitals, that generate significant spillover effects and that have been the catalyst for revitalization projects in many big cities. Few have strong philanthropic sectors that can support big initiatives. Smaller cities have fewer government officials, who are already stretched thin, and are therefore less able to respond quickly to economic development opportunities that may arise. The lack of capacity can specifically limit the ability to garner grant money, especially federal funds, while the lack of experience with grants can be a disadvantage at a time when grantors are increasingly looking for prospective grantees to have a track record. This disadvantages underresourced places that may not be able to raise matching funds and yet still experience many of the challenges of larger cities such as poverty, unemployment, and vacancy while national policy largely focuses on large cities or rural areas (Barkin 2022; Hollingsworth and Goebel 2017). As a result, it is a challenge for smaller cities to apply lessons from the experience of large cities that have been able to leverage their structural advantages. As Hollingsworth and Goebel (2017:3) note, “While many smaller legacy cities struggle with severe problems, they frequently fall under the shadow of larger cities like Detroit or Cleveland in national discussions about the future of these places.”

Our paper fills this gap in the research by focusing on small and mid-sized legacy cities in the Midwest’s old industrial belt. Specifically, our overarching research question asks, “What approaches to local economic development are small towns in the U.S. Midwest taking, especially in the context of shrinking populations and evolving economic structures?” This is an opportune time to ask this question in small and mid-sized cities, as recent analysis shows that, at least with respect to manufacturing, large firms are locating at the periphery of metropolitan areas, and as the footprint of these facilities and their suppliers expands, the dispersal of jobs could benefit smaller cities (Katz et al. 2023). At the same time, many of these older industrial cities have the infrastructure, though unused and undervalued for decades, available to be leveraged to meet the demands of the new postpandemic economy and related federal programs (Katz 2023).

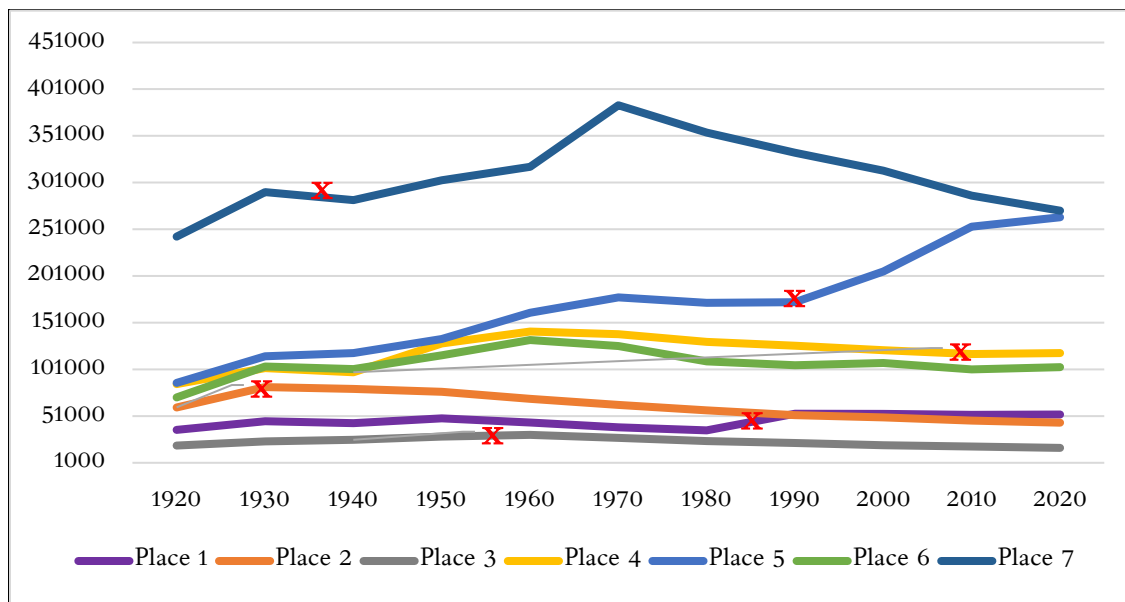
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Community Selection and Community Profiles

To glean insights into current economic development policies and practices, we conducted eight in-depth interviews with eleven economic development professionals in seven communities in Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.³ The first three interviews (two in Ohio and one in Pennsylvania) were conducted with individuals whom two of the authors knew from prior interactions. Upon completion of interviews, the interviewees were asked to suggest additional individuals in other communities whom they thought might be appropriate candidates to interview. This method of choosing interviewees is termed *snowball sampling* and is widely used in social science research

(Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). As our interviewees were not randomly selected, we do not present our findings as being representative of economic development policies and practices in the United States. Rather, this was an exploratory study with the goal of gaining some insights into contemporary economic development policies and practices in older industrial communities in four states. The jurisdictions for which the economic development professionals were responsible ranged from single cities to multi-county regions. Similar to most communities in the Midwest and Northeast, each of these communities has at least one agency that oversees locally based economic development and planning, focused on creating communities that are economically vibrant, have the ability to attract and retain talent and enhance the quality of life of current and future residents. The 11 professionals interviewed all work in some capacity in planning and economic development at either a single city or multi-county level. The mission statement for each of these agencies includes two or more of the following key words or phrases: “driving economic growth,” “promoting quality of life,” “vitality,” “attracting and retaining workers,” “high-skilled workers,” “creating employment opportunities,” “high-wage jobs,” “business growth,” “competitive community,” “supporting local businesses,” and “public service provision.”

Figure 1. Core City Population Change, 1920–2020



Note: X indicates an annexation of surrounding areas by community.

Sources: United States Census, 1920–2020.

The seven communities included in this study were a mix of small and medium-sized cities, ranging in size from approximately 15,000 to 275,000 people.⁴ Each of the seven core cities experienced population decline at some point, with five (Places 1, 2,

4, 6, and 7) experiencing their first decline during the 1930s, as shown in Figure 1. The red X in the figure indicates an annexation, whereby a city expanded its boundaries by annexing adjacent unincorporated areas. Cities that annexed surrounding areas gained population in the short run; however, in the long run, they lost the population again (usually after a decade or two). For example, Place 2 undertook annexation in the late 1920s. As a result, its 1930 population peaked and was 35% higher than it had been in 1920, but by the 1960 census, Place 2 had lost 15% of the population recorded in 1930, with population decline continuing to this day. Between 1930 and 2020, Place 2's population fell by 46.4%. Places 3, 4, and 7 experienced similar fates. Following annexation in the 1950s, Place 3 reached its peak population in 1960. By 2020, Place 3's population was 46.4% below its peak. Places 4 and 7 reached their peak population in 1960 and 1970, respectively, and then recorded declines, with their 2020 populations being 16.3% and 29.4% below their peak populations. Place 1 hit its all-time high in 1990 following an annexation but has seen a slight population decrease (1.5%) since then. Place 6 undertook annexations in the mid-1800s (not shown in chart), and population increased until 1930. It then recorded its first population decline in 1940. Its population has since fluctuated, with the 1950 and 1960 censuses recording increases and the 1970–1990 censuses recording a reduction in population. In summary, these communities have struggled to maintain or grow their populations in the long term, even after engaging in annexation.

Interviews and Analysis

In-depth virtual interviews were conducted with 11 economic development professionals from the selected communities. The interviews were conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams, with interviews lasting 54 minutes on average (between 46 and 65 minutes). Interviewees were asked the same set of questions, including the following:

- What are the emerging challenges for local economic development in your community?
- What are the emerging opportunities for local economic development in your community?
- What are your key strategies to address those challenges and take advantage of those opportunities?
- Has/will the COVID-19 pandemic have any lasting impact on how you think about and implement local economic development strategies? Has it made you fundamentally rethink existing approaches or develop any new projects?

The interviews were video-recorded and transcribed verbatim by Microsoft Teams. The transcripts were edited in Microsoft Word and then fed into the MAXQDA 2022 program to identify and code themes. MAXQDA is a qualitative data analysis software designed to work with an array of data types such as text, interviews, audios and videos,

and Twitter, and it offers numerous analytical tools for data organization, exploration, codification, and visualization of patterns and themes (Marjaei, Ahmadian Yazdi, and Chandrashekara 2019). It allows researchers to analyze data, especially qualitative data, more systematically and efficiently. To generate themes, relevant segments that express specific concepts or thoughts were highlighted and assigned specific elements (codes) in MAXQDA. The codes were then evaluated and collapsed into key themes. For each interview, the study identified how often a theme was mentioned and ranked the themes. The five most frequently raised themes are discussed extensively in the following section.

FINDINGS

Emerging Themes: Challenges, Opportunities

Our overarching goal for this paper was to understand changes in local economic development policies and practices in small to mid-sized Rust Belt cities resulting from long-term structural changes as well as short-term challenges, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although the seven places we focus on differ in significant ways—such as physical footprint, current population size, scale of population loss, decade of peak population, size of metropolitan area, access to infrastructure, the presence (or not) of large local academic institutions, the state in which they are located (the state-level policies under which they operate), their individual histories, and their individual experience of manufacturing decline, among many other factors—the narratives we gathered from economic development professionals working in these places revealed several common themes. We focus on the five that were most frequently raised/discussed:

- Workforce
- Housing and community development
- Downtown investment
- Sense of place/quality of place/placemaking/amenities
- Links to local educational institutions

In the following discussion of the five themes, direct quotations from interviewees are provided.

Workforce

It's the number 1 question we get asked, right? I mean, before it was, what incentives do you have? And then it was do you have a site? Right. They're asking workforce availability, and that's the first question, and that's really dictating where these companies are going. The site is secondary almost to whether or not you can actually fill the amount of jobs that we need to fill in that market.

—Respondent

The attraction and retention of firms continues to be a focus of economic development efforts in this region, but post-pandemic, the attraction and retention of workers has become critical. Cities are finding that they do not have enough skilled workers to take the jobs that are available and that they are unable to guarantee prospective employers that they will have access to a pool of skilled workers from which to hire. One respondent stated, “Managing the change in talent availability and talent alignment with the needs of what’s going on, particularly in the manufacturing space, given our community is so heavy in manufacturing. I would say that’s the single biggest change in the 40 years I’ve been in economic development.”

Several reasons were suggested for this shortage, including population loss, low levels of educational attainment, and, more recently, a change in workers’ sensibilities as a result of the pandemic. Population decline has a direct impact in that there is a smaller pool of workers compared to previous decades, but the job-preparedness of these workers matters as well. This challenge is both immediate and long-term, but there is a tension between two, as one respondent explained:

We all know that long term, the kind of educational services that our workforce needs, need to be a whole different set of capabilities. We need more people earning college degrees, developing coding and technical skills for the long term, while the immediate needs are much different. . . . And so, the balance between how we advocate for economic development support of our educational institutions is kind of bifurcated right now.

The pandemic has also had an impact. Our respondents have noticed a change in worker sensibilities:

There’s a lot of cultural shift that can help explain why we would be experiencing [a shortage of workers], I think COVID-19 had an enormous impact on workforce availability. . . . People have taken a step back and said, “I want to spend more time with my kids.” . . . On the opposite side of the spectrum, a lot of baby boomers and a lot of older individuals have decided to retire, right? So that they’ve left the workforce. So, there’s just things that we’re seeing here locally that I think have played a huge role in workforce availability for our existing companies and that’s a challenge for us here locally.

Managing the shortage of a skilled workforce has become a very big challenge with no easy answers.

The pandemic has also opened up some opportunities for these cities, however, particularly with respect to attracting white-collar workers who can work remotely. Several

cities recognize this opportunity and feel they can be competitive in the race to bring in new residents. The worker shortage existed “prior to the pandemic and, and it’s been, you know, it’s been amplified since. It’s also the opportunity . . . you could raise your hand up in desperation and say, ‘Oh my God, we’re never going to bring people in,’ but the opportunity is, now everyone is more mobile.”

This has led to several creative strategies to draw new residents. One town advertises and does happy-hour events in the big cities to which many of their former residents have moved, in an effort to lure them back. With the worker shortages, post-pandemic pay scales at home have risen from about 85% of the national average to about 100%–102%, which, in conjunction with lower cost of living, they believe could make the hometown an attractive destination.

Other places are looking for workers who can live in their cities while working remotely for firms in cities like Chicago. At the start of the pandemic, one town promised to pay \$10,000 to the first 25 people who had a remote job in a different state but would move into town and stay for a minimum of two years. If they had a child, enrolling that child in a public school could get them an additional \$5,000. For those 25 spots, the town got 200 applications in the first 24 hours and 4,000 applications in the first month. Those behind this scheme were clear that 25 people would not make a big difference, but they were successful in their attempt to raise their city’s profile.

As one interviewee said, “In most cases, they’re not moving for jobs anymore. They’re moving for a lifestyle.”

Housing and Community Development

I mean, we can attract the jobs, but you basically hit a ceiling if you can’t house people.
—Respondent

Despite the fact that our respondents all focus on economic development, the idea that surfaced most frequently was the importance of housing and a broadly defined conception of community development. A lot of the housing stock in these cities is old and in poor condition, so housing affordability is high but the homes are not attractive to higher-wage buyers. As one of our respondents said, “For years and years, it’s like a lot of these smaller communities like ours, I think housing, they took it for granted to such a degree that we took our eye off the ball of what was going on in housing in small communities.” One of the primary reasons for the decline in housing quality is related to long-term homeownership, the passing of the homeowners, and with younger generations having left town, the sale of these houses to landlords who rent out cheaply and do not maintain the homes, leading to a drop in value. As one interviewee noted, “You can buy a house for \$35,000, but it is not one that you would want to live in. . . . So, even though we generally come up high on the affordability of housing list, the affordability does not equal marketability.”

As these places try to attract new residents, particularly those in relatively high-wage jobs, the need for market-rate housing is increasing and economic development

professionals find that the market is not responding, or not responding quickly enough. They see the availability of housing as critical to the economic success of their city, as two respondents noted:

Yeah, I think it's something that a lot of communities are experiencing. It's not just the affordable, subsidized low-income housing. That's the challenge. It's the market-rate side, which we always thought that would take care of itself. Right? The market would take care of itself. Well, especially now with the cost of construction and interest rates, it's not taking care of itself. It's actually going the other way and so we are having to be more intentional about that, especially inside the city where we want to bring more market-rate housing online.

It's just that we did industrial economic development really well for a long time, and I think we rested on our laurels there and we're playing catch-up on the community-development piece . . . getting people to want to live here, stay here, all of those types of things.

Closely tied to housing is a broader set of factors that our respondents saw as outside traditional economic development but critical to their cities' success. They referred to these collectively as community development, and our respondents noticed a direct connection between the lack of these community development elements and the workforce. Public transportation was an example:

So, we do have a bus system here, but, you know, if you're somebody that maybe has had a situation in your life, and you fell down on your times and you're trying to better yourself, there is a way to get to work, but it may be an hour ride on the bus. . . . Ideally, we wouldn't have to worry about transportation because wages would be high enough and that people could afford their own quality transportation. But in the environment that we're in, manufacturing, they are brought in at a lower level. There is a path for advancement to get to a higher wage within about a year, but they don't make it that full year.

Other community development concerns included K–12 education and childcare. The high cost and limited availability of childcare are keeping one parent or sometimes a grandparent at home with the children when they could be in the workforce. Challenges

with transportation, childcare, and housing are causing high rates of turnover, which have been further exacerbated post-pandemic.

An unexpected example of community development was free public Wi-Fi. As one respondent said,

We went out and got a federal grant through the stimulus package for \$200,000. And now we're putting free public Wi-Fi in eight public spaces throughout the neighborhoods in [our city], right? So, we get asked a lot what are we doing for the citizens? What are we doing for the neighbors? Getting a federal grant to put in Wi-Fi. It's certainly not business attraction, right? It is not traditional economic development . . . it's community development, physical development, placemaking.

Downtown Investment

So, yeah, we had a lot of empty buildings downtown. We still have some. We acquired them from the land bank, basically, for a buck. We put RFPs out for a dollar. Hey, you want a free building?

—Respondent

The exodus of businesses and people from downtowns over the past several decades has been a shared experience for many cities in this region. Part of the effort to bring residents and visitors back has been to make large investments downtown, and although this is not a new strategy, it is one that many of the cities in our sample have undertaken. In doing this, economic development professionals are hoping for two linked outcomes: leveraging additional private investment and drawing people back.

In one example, a respondent explained,

We made a conscious decision as a community and said downtown is vitally important to the growth of the city and of the region, and we spent the last 20 years really focusing on some significant downtown development. . . . Before that we've got a couple of decades with literally a few million dollars invested in downtown. We've now seen over the last 13 years, \$1.3 billion invested downtown, major housing developments, commercial developments, new office space. People coming back in from the suburbs and back in from other communities and creating a very vibrant downtown that's attracting investment, and that coincides with a complete change in the domestic migration patterns . . . we've had five straight years of positive domestic migrations, so investing in ourselves, investing in

quality of place and urban development has changed the growth pattern of the community. . . . That's affected some of the job growth. We're getting jobs now that we were losing 15 years ago, 10 years ago. They were saying we weren't competitive for these jobs and now we're gaining these types of higher-wage jobs.

This belief in downtown investment was reflected in a county-wide survey of businesses commissioned by the local business-development alliance (akin to a Chamber of Commerce), in which 90% of respondents said that downtown's revitalization had a strong impact on their ability to attract and retain the talent they need, rating this higher than other factors such as public safety and quality public schools.

Other traditional efforts, such as façade programs or attraction/retention of downtown businesses, continue to be a focus. Over the pandemic, a number of businesses, such as restaurants, closed while others became more efficient, with reduced hours and fewer staff. Cities also see a thriving downtown as an amenity that will draw and keep residents:

They already feel like you've told them the right story and now they're coming in and they're trying to give it a shot, you know, they're going to say, "Okay, I'm going to bring my family." . . . But once they're here it becomes more of the "Uh, okay, so what are you doing to keep me here?" and that's where you get more into the traditional economic-development stuff. . . . You've got to have the amenities, and we've been working on that for years . . . these third places where people, you know, experience each other in the place, and they come together to tell stories. And so, we've been very purposeful about reaching out to food and beverage operators, breweries. We went from zero microbreweries eight years ago to nine, so we added one a year, but we've actually added more than one a year in the nine years. And, and that's important because those are the places the next generation are looking for. They're asking for that, you know, so it's like, "Hey, how are your K-12, and how many breweries do you have?" And so, if you can offer up nine that, you know they can go to and socialize and take their kids and sort of get into the rhythm of the community. It's really important. So that was a strategy, and it's working.

Other communities are finding ways to subsidize businesses willing to move downtown—for example, a real estate investment fund—as one respondent explained: "We worked with local entrepreneurs, anybody that wanted to come in and basically, geographically downtown. If you want to start up a business, you want to move your business there, we have up to a quarter million dollars to help fill that gap."

Sense of Place/Quality of Place/Placemaking/Amenities

In most cases, they're not moving for jobs anymore. They're moving for a lifestyle.

—Respondent

Cities are finding that it is not just the job but the character of a place and what it offers that draws workers in: “There’s this fear that we won’t be able to attract the jobs that we want if we don’t have the population growth to help support it, so we better incent quality of place, and so we’ve spent as much time here locally even on quality-place kind of projects in recent years, sort of a little bit away from your traditional economic development but equally important in terms of just setting the right tone for the community.” Reflecting this and using a range of words such as *sense of place*, *quality of place*, *quality of life*, and *placemaking*, respondents referred to creating communities where people—especially younger workers—want to live. One of our respondents said that, in addition to direct recruiting, “the other thing that we think is critical for population growth is tangible investment in those quality-of-place amenities that matter to our target audience, which is really 18- to 35-year-olds. We love older people, but we’re not targeting them . . . (and) we remind everyone that we older folks like the same things that younger folks like, for the most part. So, it’s going to be fine.”

One important aspect of quality of life in a community is a vibrant downtown with events and activities. It includes physical spaces—so-called *third places*—that are neither home nor work but where people can gather informally and build community (as noted in the section above). One example was a city council’s willingness to raise taxes and dedicate half of this revenue to a \$100 million riverfront project. Cities are trying to bring restaurants, bars, and, increasingly, brewpubs into their downtowns. A respondent from another city said,

Not only do people want to have a good job and stable housing, they also want to like where they live, or love where they live, and so stronger focus on placemaking and differentiating our market from others is really important. So, you look at everything that we’ve done downtown, that has certainly met that criteria. The riverwalk is an absolute game changer for this region and our ability to sell it and attract talent. We also have a brand-new 80-acre metro park . . . (with) high-quality amenities, like an ice-skating ribbon, interactive water plays, sliding hills, I mean, just so much to do in it. It was something that we looked at other cities like Grand Rapids, Chicago, Columbus, as ways that they have successfully activated their riverfronts, and so we’ve learned lessons from them, and when you look at those types of cities, those cities are growing in population for the most part. People are locating there for . . . quality of life, as opposed to just, you know, job creation. And so, I would say we have a

stronger focus on creating a sense of place within the city and focusing on downtown, these amenities, our neighborhood development, it's all very important.

Cities are also viewing infrastructure investments as related to quality of life and therefore related to economic development. For example, one city invested half of its revenues from a tax increase on sidewalk infrastructure—connecting schools to sidewalks, connecting neighborhoods with sidewalk improvements, and fixing alleys that hadn't been touched in more than a century. In this case, infrastructure improvements were seen as contributing to quality of place and as just-as-valuable direct investments in traditional economic development activities such as business development or worker training.

Quality of place, however, goes beyond the physical. It certainly means a walkable or bikeable community as fewer younger workers want to buy cars. In addition to having high walk scores, however, “there's plenty of data that says that a young workforce is not going to look at a region that's not clearly welcoming and inclusive, that does not show sensitivity to climate issues and the environment, and does not have a forward-leaning focus.” Economic development planners are beginning to think about these things as well.

All these communities have a very clear view of what they can offer in terms of quality of place and how they compare to the big cities in their region, as one respondent noted:

I mean, if you don't have a big airport, don't say you have airport access that's 90 miles away, because you don't. And also, if you're a town that has a certain amount of cultural amenities, but not enough, it would be like, “Hey, we're just like a big city.” You know, we're not. So, the challenge always is . . . how do you deliver the message that's accurate and genuine, you know, to being an authentic place. . . . Sometimes, being authentic and accurate could also be viewed as showing all your weaknesses, you know, in a way that, you know, some people may say, “Well, I wish we were better. I wish we did something else.” We can't change that we're a mountain town. We wear a lot of flannel, and we also can't change that our weather is gray nine and a half months out of the year. So, we have to turn those things into a positive and kind of put it out there and say this is us. You know, yeah, it's gray for nine months, but the bars are open, you know, trying to make sure people are active during winter, get out there and go skiing, you know, cross-country, all the activities that happen whenever winter arrives.

Other communities distinguish themselves from, but make use of their proximity to, big cities for access to big-city amenities: “We're not Chicago. But we have to provide a certain level of amenities that keep those folks wanting to live here and happy to live here

and then they can still get their Chicago fix by driving over, so we have amplified our focus on placemaking activities. Because that's what people want. They're wanting experiences."

Links to Local Educational Institutions

I do think universities are the incubation of ideas and such, and trying to create this environmental or entrepreneurial culture and such that they build upon. [Our] university has an "x" facility here that used to be for researchers on campus doing research on "x" for like jet engines or power plants. They now have 100 people at that site that all make more than \$100,000 a year.

—Respondent

Not all the cities in this study had universities, but those that did found them to be a tremendous asset for economic development. Some of our respondents said that the presence of a nearby university was an asset as firms were looking for places to locate: "We have a really good set of universities and that carries us, but it's starting to actually be something that site consultants and people that are making business location and capital investment decisions are looking at." The students were also seen as an asset and as integral to workforce development, especially in places where students may come to study but not necessarily to work:

We've got to build this channel of talents for the long term, because we're not going to be a natural relocation. You know, people are not gonna say, "I'm going to move to [this region] because I've always wanted to live there." We've got to put ourselves on the map and do all we can do. Keep our talent here and so every university student who comes here is going to have a great internship opportunity and lots of ways to know the community before they leave.

Given the importance of manufacturing in this region, this tapping of students can start at the high school level. One program took students who were not interested in attending four-year colleges with their parents on a bus tour to visit manufacturing facilities, "the ones that they knew had technology that were dynamic, that paid well, were clean, to simply show young people that probably weren't going to go to college, here's opportunities for you to get good paying jobs to support families and hopefully stay here in the region. That really became a best practice that many others throughout the region did, because it was showing such great results."

Universities and community colleges were also seen as partners in training workers for very specific local needs. One place incentivized a small local university to build up their nursing program and, as our respondent said, "Getting a nursing program launched is a big hurdle, because nursing faculty cost extraordinarily more than other faculty. So that's the way that we've been able to use our scarce resources to insert a program that will begin

to tangibly fill the pipeline with nursing and other healthcare professionals for our market. So, [the university is] a very strong partner with us in that particular space.” In another example, “[our community colleges] are doing a great job of working with our manufacturers on specific [areas]—manufacturing technicians, electricians, and building the curriculum out to be aligned with the employer’s need here for [a large auto company]. They’ve got a global organization that figures out how to effectively build out their pipelines with the local communities, and they’re doing a great job of that here.”

With their research and development activities, universities—especially the big ones—are seen as drivers of local economic development. In one of our cases, “[our university] has decided they want to play more in the research space. . . . Twelve years ago, they were doing none. That is spinning off into some development opportunities in the community. . . . I do think universities are the incubation of ideas and such and trying to create this environmental or entrepreneurial culture and such that [we can] build upon.” In another example of the benefits of a university, if a company—particularly an advanced manufacturing company—was looking to locate in a certain state, our respondents felt that their proximity to a big university would give them an advantage over other locations in the state.

Big universities can also help existing businesses. For example:

We all get excited about the attraction, but growing existing businesses perhaps is the more important piece for us, and [our university] plays heavy in that space. Now, we got a grant from [a local foundation] several years back that put some dollars in our marketplace that allowed [our university] to go into local companies and kind of almost be an R&D kind of department for them. So, they’re solving some real problems in the local industry that will ultimately help those local industries grow.

Universities contribute to the quality of life of a place, making it more attractive for workers. Respondents pointed to sports and cultural events. Our respondents also pointed to the strength of the alumni network and the ability to leverage connections. In one example, one of our places was competing for a Midwest call center that went to a competing Midwest city in another state: “I think there was a lot [of] thought that if we leverage [our university’s] relationships in the right way, would [we] be on the top of mind and not [our competitor]? Because really there’s not a lot of differences between us and [them]. . . . Can we leverage those kinds of relationships?”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our primary purpose in this paper was to identify the most common challenges and opportunities facing economic development practitioners in seven legacy cities, and the strategies being utilized to address the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities. The impact of COVID-19 was also of interest. This research was conducted within the framework of the four waves of economic development suggested by previous studies. To

what extent were these various waves apparent in the work of the economic development officials we interviewed?

Our conversations with economic development policymakers and practitioners revealed five most commonly cited issues. These were workforce, housing and community development, downtown investment, sense of place/quality of place/placemaking/amenities, and links to local educational institutions. This is not to say that other issues were not important. For example, although the use of incentives to attract outside investment (a first-wave strategy) was not mentioned frequently, it was clear that it was still a tool in the toolbox of the contemporary economic development practitioner and was utilized when an appropriate opportunity presented itself. Many of the issues identified during our conversations are best characterized as being focused on addressing factors that would be beneficial to existing businesses and residents while also being attractive to potential investors and workers from outside. These included attractive market-rate housing, affordable childcare, a vibrant downtown, high-quality amenities such as brewpubs and parks with unique activity spaces such as ice-skating rinks, and the like. Broadly speaking, these are factors that enhance the quality of life (fourth wave) that a place has to offer. Talent attraction and retention was also identified as a key issue. With respect to talent, a major challenge is having a sufficient number of workers with the skill sets demanded by local employers. An absence of the appropriate skill sets results in a demand-supply mismatch. One mechanism to address this mismatch (a second-wave issue) is establishing links to and partnerships with local educational institutions (third wave). A number of the individuals we interviewed cited such partnerships as important. Third-wave solutions to second-wave challenges suggest that the strategies identified under the various waves of economic development do not exist in silos but are connected. Other examples exist. A high quality of life (fourth wave) will help communities attract outside investment (first wave).

Although some of our interviewees suggested that the talent shortage has been exacerbated by COVID-19, the pandemic also provides a potential opportunity for these communities. All of them offer a cost of living that is below the national average and, as a result, have the potential to attract workers currently living in higher-cost-of-living places and who have the ability to work remotely. The communities that will be most successful in attracting remote workers are those who can meet the quality-of-life expectations of prospective residents. That, we believe, will separate them from their competitors.

NOTES

1. Although definitions of which states constitute the Rust Belt vary, every definition that we have come across includes Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania (see, for example, Alder et al. 2014; Rhodes 2019). While we recognize the label *Rust Belt* is for some people pejorative (Trubek 2018), we choose to use it because it is a term with which many people are familiar. When referring to the communities themselves, however, we refer to *legacy cities*, a term that has become popular in recent years (Berube 2019).

2. More information about the International Economic Development Council can be found at its website, <https://www.iedconline.org/index.php>.
3. In three cases, two individuals from an economic development professionals participated in the same interview.
4. Population data were obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau.

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The Adaptation Wedge: Capacity-Building Scenarios for India's Cities

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ABSTRACT

The increasing frequency and severity of floods, heat waves, and storm surges impacting global cities, combined with the growing morbidity in public health, necessitates prompt and effective climate action. Adaptation and mitigation require adequate and appropriate institutional, technical, and societal capacities—all of which are in short supply in most low- and middle-income country cities that are experiencing growth while suffering vulnerabilities. Although national governments are alerted to climate risk and the imperatives of planning, financing, and managing climate transitions, their responses to capacity constraints and approaches to capacity building display neither urgency nor scale. We use a scenario-building methodology to examine this crisis in the context of cities in India. We review the literature and draw upon personal experiences in capacity building, policymaking, and practice to highlight the underestimation of scale and complexity of adaptive capacity required by India's cities. We discuss systemic barriers that prevent cities from accessing the required human and financial resources, ranging from the seemingly innocuous, such as language, to the profoundly challenging, such as scant knowledge of climate communication in civil society and community-based organizations. Other barriers include the reluctance of local universities to engage with messy real-world problems and India's protectionist stance on trade in green services. Drawing on the analysis of gaps and barriers, we project a disruptive scenario whereby cities proactively leverage networks and partnerships to augment their adaptive capacities, especially in planning and finance, partly by using city labs that form vital bridges between global expertise and local demand. We describe the potential of information and communication technologies and digital platforms to inform the policies and institutional structures required for capacity building and also catalyze a vibrant ecosystem of resources available to cities in need. We conclude by suggesting that such networks, by seamlessly and speedily connecting

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global expertise to local action, serve the common interests of the entire global community.

KEY WORDS Adaptation; Capacity Building; Cities; Ecosystems; Infrastructure

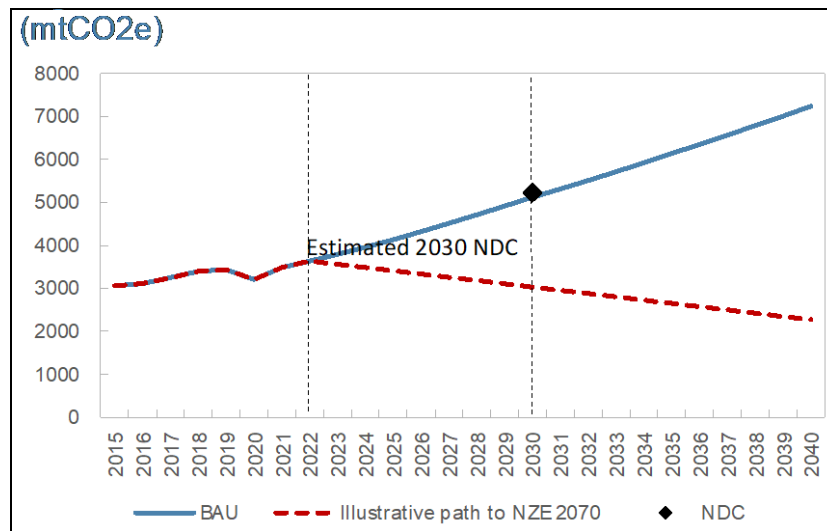
In a recent working paper (Chateau et al. 2023), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) presents a range of critical policy trade-offs that will determine whether India can deliver on its intent to achieve decarbonization of the economy by 2070, a nationally determined contribution (NDC) goal that it announced at COP26 in Glasgow. India needs to factor in the possible rise in government expenditure, the costs associated with prevailing distortions in the economy, and the new types of jobs required to achieve transitions in five most critical sectors: power, industrial, transport, residential, and agriculture. India will also have to protect its population from the impacts on public health caused by environmental pollution because “those activities that drive climate change globally also tend to be significant producers of pollution locally.” The paper notes the grim estimation by India’s National Health Authority that climate change will cause about 250,000 additional deaths per year between 2030 and 2050 because of malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress. The authors cite new research showing that, because of pollution in 2019, premature deaths and morbidity caused US\$28.8 billion and US\$8 billion, respectively, in output loss, “with the poorest disproportionately affected.” They conclude that “any delays in transitioning from the current emissions path towards a more sustainable one will increase costs and decrease cumulative benefits.”

To illustrate the imperative for India to pursue critical policy trade-offs, the IMF uses a graph (Figure 1) showing the rising trajectory of greenhouse gas emissions if India follows “business as usual” (BAU) to achieve its key NDC target: 45% reduction in emissions intensity (relative to 2005) by 2030. The authors add an “illustrative path” to show the downward deflection toward net zero emissions by 2070 if the deflection begins in 2022 and is sustained.

The deflection of India’s emissions trajectory, the departure from BAU, would represent an increase in decarbonization efforts across the whole of government and all sectors of the economy, involving increasing numbers of actors and increasing scope and scale of actions with every passing year. The scope and complexity of these efforts has been described in detail in India’s most recent Biennial Update Report (BUR) submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which also states candidly that “the capacity-building needs expressed by India through the national reporting process to the Convention since 2004 are still relevant but remain mostly unmet and continue to multiply” (MOEFCC 2021). In a 500-page document, this blink-and-you-miss-it statement on page 381 is emblematic of the routine way in which the issue of capacity building receives lip service in many countries. India’s BUR admits that “capacity building is one of the primary requirements for achieving the objectives of the Convention,” but presents as response that “government programs invariably have a component on capacity building/training/awareness creation” and describes a panoply of

workshops and seminars and training sessions funded by bilateral and multilateral organizations to substantiate effort.

Figure 1. Business as Usual (BAU) and Deflection Toward Net Zero



Note: BAU=business as usual; NDC=nationally determined contribution; NZE2070=net zero emissions by 2070.

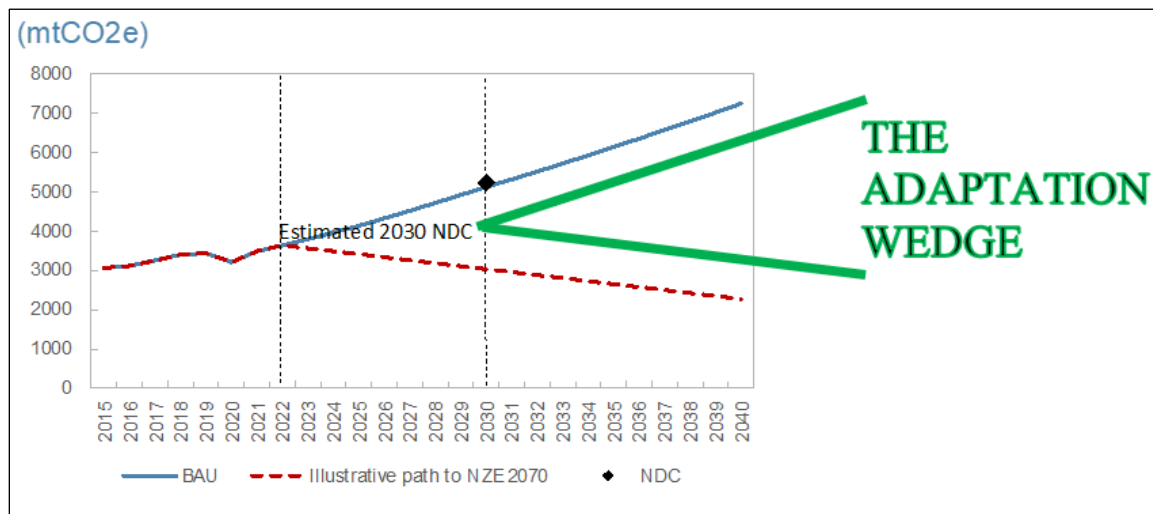
Source: Chateau et al. (2023).

This paper originates from the author’s long-standing observation that capacity building receives routine mention and mundane treatment in global discourse on climate adaptation whereas it is a critical factor and binding constraint that deserves greater attention. The author’s interest in writing the paper was triggered by the mention on page 384 in India’s BUR, in a list of “significant achievements” of the National Mission on Strategic Knowledge for Climate Change, an activity with which he was closely associated and which he found to be unproductive and without impact.¹ The passing mention of capacity building in the BUR—about 5 pages of a 500-page document—suggests that the subject continues to be given short shrift. This lack of attention is pervasive in climate discourse. The NDC Stocktake by the UNFCC finds that “75 per cent of Parties identified capacity-building as a prerequisite for NDC implementation” and lists the activities of “training, education, upskilling, awareness-raising, research, innovation, development, and providing incentives and support to businesses and entrepreneurs” to describe the response to the “prerequisite” (UNFCC 2023b). Similarly, the stocktake of each country’s long-term low-emissions development strategy (LT-LEDS) also mentions that “capacity-building was deemed crucial to the implementation of the LT-LEDS operational strategy” and notes that the parties include “education and training, entrepreneurship, awareness-raising and transfer of know-how” among “a broad range of capacity-building measures” (UNFCC 2023a).

Capacity building is a difficult area for research and action. Although it is routinely measured by numbers of activities, neither the knowledge nor the skills produced because of capacity building are measured and monitored. The critical role of capacity in the success of development programs globally was highlighted by the World Bank in 2009, when it published the Capacity Development Results Framework as a “sorely needed” guide to assist all stakeholders to address “the lack of clear definitions, coherent conceptual frameworks, and effective monitoring of results” that pervade capacity-development work (Otoo, Agapitova, and Behrens 2009). The World Bank noted that, despite the widespread agreement on the general principles of effective capacity development, “the results of efforts to develop capacity have persistently fallen short of expectations.”

This paper considers capacity building as an exhaustive process that begins with identification of needs and concludes with confirmation that capacity-building efforts have had the required impact. We recognize capacity building as a critical requirement for the success of India’s efforts to decouple its development from BAU. Adequate and appropriate capacity must be available in all institutions, sectors, and actors to implement and support decarbonization. Adaptive capacity is required for all critical trade-offs mentioned by the IMF, including improving the quality of government expenditure, reducing the costs associated with prevailing distortions in the economy and shifting to “green” jobs. Working on this premise, decoupling presents a challenging scenario for India, wherein the difference between the BAU trajectory and the deflection to net zero is affected by the availability and quality of national and subnational capacities. We describe the world of decarbonization efforts by drawing attention to the region of the graph (Figure 2) between the BAU and net zero pathways and call it the adaptation wedge, which consists of the entire range of decarbonization activities that together function as the force of deflection.

Figure 2. The Adaptation Wedge



Note: BAU=business as usual; NDC=nationally determined contribution; NZE2070=net zero emissions by 2070.

We discuss this scenario in the context of India's urbanization, which is a defining trend of India's development and growth and, as such, poses a key challenge for decarbonization. The successful implementation of policies and programs for low-emissions urban development as envisaged by India in its LT-LEDS would define the prospect of the adaptation wedge.

Excluded from our discussion is the issue of developing innovative and indigenized technologies for net zero, such as "moon-shot technologies" in offshore wind, green hydrogen, and energy storage systems. It is sufficient to note, however, that even in technologies for decarbonization, capacity constraints pose an acknowledged but hard-to-assess risk. A recent attempt at assessing the opportunity uses a model² that assumes "a reduction in technology costs via local deployment due to enhanced learnings in the industry and supported local innovation over and above the projected reduction in global technology costs over time." The authors note, however, that the model "does not provide insight into soft costs for developing research and development infrastructure along with capacity building efforts" (Jerome et al. 2023). This limitation in the model illustrates how capacity constraints continue to evade action.

INDIAN CITIES: NEGLECTED FRONTLINES FOR CLIMATE ACTION

India's cities are demand generators as well as outcomes of the country's transitions in energy, digital technology, agriculture, industry, and transportation planning that are driving the growth in the Indian economy. Cities are nodes in an integrated economy that connects producers to consumers and farms to forks through supply chains (Ernst & Young 2020). They function as growth hubs, demand generators, and suppliers of innovation, skills, and finance for India's development transitions, but aged and inadequate infrastructure, poorly delivered municipal services, and constrained local finances make them highly vulnerable to cascading risks. Cities offer better health, nutrition, education, and access to drinking water and sanitation facilities than do rural areas (Sridhar 2016). They attract migrants who enrich the workforce but are denied easy access to housing and services, contributing to unregulated growth on the peripheries and further burdening the environment and already-strained public infrastructure and services.

The urban population has grown by more than 250 million people since 1991, the year when India commenced liberalization of its economy. By 2036, India is expected to add another 344 million people to its urban areas, accounting for 70% of the overall increase of the country's population and accounting for more than 70% of the jobs (Agarwal 2020). The ten fastest-growing cities in the world are all located in India (Coalition for Urban Transitions 2021). Although the overall rate³ of urbanization in India is lower than for other low- and middle-income countries and South Asia, it is averaged across a crowded landscape of 7935 towns, cities, and urban agglomerations, ranging from populations of five thousand to more than twenty million, with the smallest towns proliferating the most and mostly without municipal administration.

In 2016, the World Bank described India's urbanization as "messy" and "hidden," considering its unplanned and unregulated nature and the underestimation caused by a distorted official definition of what is urban (Ellis and Roberts 2016). The environmental

impacts of such a messy growth trajectory will naturally affect the domestic population and economy the most, but the knock-on effects will be felt globally. According to India's LT-LEDS released at COP27 in Sharm-al-Sheikh in 2022, "It is estimated that 75% of India's GDP in 2030 will be generated from urban regions [and] a major part of India's emissions are from cities" (MOEFCC 2022). India's emissions footprint is expected to expand over the coming decades as India closes its infrastructure gaps, upgrades old infrastructure, and provides energy, housing, and services to the urban population. Its emissions are expected to increase by 50% by 2040, the highest by any country (Busby et al. 2021).

In 2018, India contributed about 7% to global carbon dioxide emissions from fuel combustion, the third highest worldwide after China (28%) and the United States (15%), but its per capita emissions are one third of China's and one tenth of the United States' emissions (Union of Concerned Scientists 2023), an outcome of its demography providing a large denominator as well as the frugal life led by the average Indian citizen. Although these current differentials and the promotion of behavior change through Mission LiFE (Lifestyles for Environment)⁴ may create room for India to deflect its emissions trajectory, mitigation will be sustained over the next few decades only if the various sectors of the economy are progressively decarbonized and made resilient to the hazards and shocks related to the climate, which can cause losses and damages that wipe out the gains from mitigation. Adaptation is an imperative for India because its development trajectory relies on urbanization and the economies of agglomeration. The country must push the adaptation wedge harder, forcing a faster and more decisive deflection of the emissions curve. This imperative is made more urgent by the risks faced by India's cities.

Unprecedented rainfall and flooding caused devastating floods in Chennai in 2015, costing US\$3 billion in losses to India's economy. Extreme weather events in 2019 cost the country an estimated US\$69 billion (Eckstein, Künzel, and Schäfer). Climate change has forced fourteen million people to migrate in 2021 (Nandi 2020). Air pollution from coal-fired power plants, seasonal crop burning, construction dust, and automobile emissions claimed 1.67 million lives and 1.4% of GDP in 2019 (Busby et al. 2021). Three-fourths of India's population is exposed to high- to medium-hazard risks, of which a third are in about five hundred cities (Jain and Bazaz n.d.). More than eighty million people living in informal settlements are particularly vulnerable during extreme hazard events because of the "accumulation of risks" that they face because of limited resources to cope with frequent low-intensity losses in the past, thus creating "a vicious cycle of poverty and disaster risk" (IPCC 2012).

India's action on adaptation has been slow even as it demonstrated at COP26 that it was the only G20 economy on track to achieve its NDCs. It formulated a National Action Plan on Climate Change in 2008, but only half of India's 53 million-plus cities, which host more than 40% of the urban population and more than 13% of the overall population, have prepared adaptation plans, and even those are limited to sector-specific projects addressing singular risks, thus missing the opportunity to capture co-benefits (Singh et al. 2021). Poor urban planning has been identified as a major cause of hazards such as water scarcity (G 2019) and flooding (Singh and Upmanyu), but it is equally evident in the inferior quality of housing neighborhoods and open spaces and in the difficult access to schools and healthcare facilities and public transportation.

India has been described as a “reluctant urbaniser” (Puri and Shah 2018) because of the primacy accorded to agriculture as the driver of the national economy. Cities faced neglect for close to seven decades until 2014, when the government formed by the Bhartiya Janta Party created an assertive rhetoric around urbanization, committing unprecedented levels of public funding to urban development. Whereas the first ambitious urban program, the National Urban Renewal Mission of 2005, had focused on 64 cities and committed US\$20 billion over eight years, the Modi government claims to have spent in six years (2015–2021) eight times what was spent in the preceding decade (2004–2014; Business Standard 2021); however, although the main urban programs were launched for completion within five years, they were given extended timelines for completion in almost double that time. Furthermore, the outcomes and impacts of these huge investments will remain moot because, as per the G20’s Global Infrastructure Hub (GIH, n.d.), India “does not undertake post-completion reviews for infrastructure projects” which “could help determine whether projects have achieved their objectives efficiently and identify areas of improvement.”

The GIH’s findings resonate with a recent analysis of India’s urban programs that highlights capacity challenges as a core concern and risk for urban development. The paper notes that Indian cities implement diverse programs through “overlapping authorities and administrative powers” (Bhatt and Roychoudhury 2024). Although the main programs, the Smart Cities Mission, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, Housing for All, *Swacch Bharat* Mission (Clean India Mission), and Digital India, have corresponding organizational structures and funds,

there is no perceptible convergence of these programs on the ground. . . . Coupled with the lack of capacity and capability at the municipal level, this often results in a lack of collaboration. ULBs [urban local bodies] and city and state governments have seldom focused on building such skill sets, and the lack of expertise has led to project delays. (Bhatt and Roychoudhury 2024:379–80)

Capacity constraints make the execution of programs inefficient and working at cross-purposes, “leading to duplication, bureaucratic delays, and mission creep” (Bhatt and Roychoudhury 2024:379). In addition to inefficient implementation, capacity constraints also manifest in the deficient quality of India’s infrastructure, which the GIH rates as a humbling 68.1 on a scale of 100. Deficient quality can have a deleterious effect on adaptation measures and the value for money that India can extract from spending on resilient future-proofed infrastructure, which “returns four dollar worth of benefit for every dollar invested” (World Bank 2019). India needs to reap the “triple dividend” that accrues from climate adaptation—the avoidance of losses, the induced economic and development benefits, and the social and environmental co-benefits of adaptation actions—but needs to secure its strategy for enhancing adaptive capacities, especially because the second and third dividends, the economic, social, and environmental gains from adaptation, “accrue regardless of whether the actual climate risk materializes” (Heubaum et al. 2022). The

likelihood of reaping the triple dividend is limited further by the chronic challenges facing the infrastructure sector in India.

INDIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGE

A study by McKinsey & Company published in 2009 identified “inefficient project execution” as a key contributor to the poor progress of infrastructure creation in India and the cause of a cumulative loss of 10% of GDP between 2008 and 2017 (Gupta, Gupta, and Netze 2009). The study found that “major bottlenecks” were caused by the fact that “provider skills are weak across the value chain,” mentioning the “below-par design and engineering skills” and “weak risk management skills.” More than a decade after this seemingly harsh assessment by McKinsey, the issues of capacity constraints and mission creep recur in the context of the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP), through which India seeks to develop 6,835 projects across all infrastructure sectors, including 17% in the urban sector, with an estimated expenditure of US\$1.4 trillion between 2020 and 2025. The World Bank (2022) has estimated that India's cities will require US\$55 billion per annum, consistent with the NIP's annual estimates but required for an extended time of 15 years. Quarterly status reports on the progress of the NIP are prepared by the Infrastructure and Project Monitoring Division of the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation. The report for the September–December 2022 quarter for “Projects costing US\$20 million⁵ & above” finds that of 1,575 projects—comprising 1,130 “major” projects, each costing between US\$20 million and US\$135 million, and 445 “mega” projects, each costing about US\$135 million and above—893 were delayed and 396 had accumulated cost overruns of US\$61.75 billion, amounting to 21.42% of their sanctioned cost.

The reasons cited for delays are well known and have an endemic character: delays in obtaining approvals, licenses, permissions, and right-of-way for the execution of works; delays in land acquisition and access to project sites; and difficulties in local operations. The reasons for cost overruns include price increases and inflation, changes in exchange rates and duties and taxes, changes in scope of projects, underestimation of original cost, spiraling land-acquisition costs, and delays in the tendering and ordering and supply of equipment. Mission creep is also evident in the concurrent listing of 5,678 “non-NIP” projects by the Department for Industrial Policy & Promotion,⁶ including 3,573 “stressed assets” that are under the purview of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code of 2016, of which 2,645 are ready for new investors.

Poor project planning and execution are symptomatic of a deeper malaise, a lack of attention to consequences and an unwillingness to take account of risks, characteristic of techno-financial subcultures that thrive in regimes of low accountability and transparency. The inefficient execution of the NIP reflects the lack of appropriate capacity in the infrastructure sector, jeopardizing India's development and its growth ambitions. While the NIP is sufficient reason for India to place higher stakes on capacity building, it is critical that India build a strategy for creating the adaptation wedge, the capacity to sustain low-carbon infrastructure development, retrofitting, and operations and maintenance for the next several decades. A unified approach is essential for developing and sustaining infrastructural assets and services. The challenge is compounded by two additional factors.

First is that, in the Indian context, the economic and developmental outcomes targeted by the national government may not be aligned with the motivations of the state and local governments that enjoy significant autonomy in matters related to land management, district and local administration, and various material and financial aspects of infrastructure development. Second, India's commitment to net zero by 2070 implies that the infrastructure development must drive growth in new ways, ensuring low carbon transitions in energy, industry, agriculture, transportation, and urbanization.

ADAPTIVE CAPACITY MATTERS FOR INDIA

India's climate response has been a subject of expanding domestic attention since 2004, when India submitted its first National Communication (NATCOM) to the UNFCCC, prepared after a two-year-long deliberative process involving a comprehensive list of national and subnational departments of government, research organizations, and experts (MOEFCC 2004). The NATCOM captured India's comprehensive stocktaking at the end of a decade following the establishment of the Framework Convention in 1992. As per Article 6 of the Convention, governments were committed to "educate, empower and engage all stakeholders and major groups on policies relating to climate change" (UNFCCC n.d.). These commitments were iterated in the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, and the capacity-building agenda has been repeatedly affirmed and strengthened through adoption of Frameworks for Capacity Building in 2001, the Durban Forum for Capacity Building in 2011, and the subsequent launch of the Capacity-Building Portal in 2012. The Paris Agreement of 2015 introduced Article 11 and called on all countries to define their capacity-building-related goals and guiding principles and set the procedural obligations. Developed countries were asked to support capacity building in developing countries and developing countries Parties "to regularly communicate progress on implementing capacity-building plans, policies, actions or measures." The Conference of Parties also endorsed Article 12, which "recognizes the importance of climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information." A Paris Committee on Capacity-Building was established at COP 21, and the commitment to capacity building has been iterated at every subsequent occasion. The work on laying down frameworks, protocols, procedures, and indicators continues unabated, having reached a stage where the monitoring and evaluation of capacity-building efforts is being refined (Brooks and Adger n.d.).

It might seem from the plethora of documents regarding capacity building produced since 1992 under the UNFCCC and by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and numerous other multilateral agencies and international bodies and organizations that the adaptation wedge is a reality, that India and other countries have taken the required actions to build the necessary capacity for effective climate transition. That this constraint does not receive any mention in the IMF's recent assessment of India's net zero challenges could indicate either of two scenarios: one, that the IMF does not consider capacity as a constraint, or two, that the IMF assumes India will make all the required efforts for building capacity and thus the constraint does not need highlighting. The latter seems unlikely, given that BAU is producing a carbon-intensive trajectory and

that the infrastructure and urban sectors are delivering poor outcomes. It is most likely that, while capacity building has been repeatedly mentioned as a need, it has received limited attention and the official statements of intent have not translated into actions.

India's NATCOM is replete with references to the capacity building required for all actors in the economy, identifying a key constraint in India's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint; however, two decades after the NATCOM, India's LT-LEDS of 2022 contains several identical averments that spell out an expectation that the international community should fund the adaptive capacity required by India, in addition to the required finance and technology transfer: "From a global carbon equity perspective, India is justified in seeking that developed countries undertake early net-zero, well before 2050, by investing heavily in negative emissions, and providing adequate climate finance, technology transfer and capacity building support" (MOEFCC 2022).

The onus placed on the developed countries is remarkable when compared with the self-confidence expressed in the NATCOM in 2004, especially because India has made significant achievements in mitigation through solar energy generation, energy efficiency, and promotion of electric vehicles, albeit the results of innovation in procurement and industrial policy, not the adaptations that result from improved and distributed capabilities. The LT-LEDS repeatedly mentions the triad of finance, technology transfer, and capacity building as obligations that the developed countries must fulfill and the necessary conditions for the adaptation and resilience building that must be undertaken "to maintain India's development gains and human development outcomes and sustain its growth and development." It can be surmised that the linking of India's sustainable development with foreign assistance could be a tactic to support the larger agenda of developing countries at COP 27, the demand for a loss-and-damage fund, which has recently been realized at COP 28 in Dubai; however, although the tactic achieved geopolitical goals, it does not constitute an approach to fulfilling the need for adaptive capacity within the country. It perpetuates the lack of attention to capacity building for climate action that characterizes a more entrenched attitude.

The National Institute for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) undertook a highly significant initiative in 2020 by convening deliberations with an advisory committee comprising prominent experts concerned with urban planning and capacity building and publishing a report of their findings in September 2021, titled *Reforms in Urban Planning Capacity in India*. The report was a first-of-its-kind appraisal of the need for improving the supply of urban planners who can deal with the complex and challenging task of planning Indian cities, which have mostly grown in an unplanned manner. The report sets the context by acknowledging that the infrastructure of many Indian cities and towns is under "immense stress" because of "unregulatable development" (NITI Ayog 2021:2). The report mentions climate change and poverty as additional stresses.

The advisory committee focused its attention on the creation of a supply chain of urban planning professionals from public- and private-sector educational institutions while it "noted that there are numerous other challenges in urban sector such as weak finances in ULBs, infrastructural shortages, impacts of climate change, lack of regional planning, weaknesses in land record management and asset management etc." (NITI Aayog 2021:29).

When juxtaposed with the LT-LEDS report, which includes the issues of urban planning, urban design, municipal administration, and allied issues as relevant to achieving low-carbon development, the NITI Aayog report reveals the lack of foresight in failing to recognize that urban planning is the most critical enabler of adaptation, and again highlights a telling feature of India's climate response: the silos in which different ministries and departments operate and the resulting lack of coordinated response to an issue that poses risks for India's development.

BUILDING THE ADAPTATION WEDGE

The adaptation wedge needed by India is not unique. Other low- and middle-income countries may have similar trajectories. What sets India apart is the size and scale of the wedge described by the divergence between the BAU trajectory and the transformation needed to achieve net zero. Adaptation and mitigation require adequate and appropriate institutional, technical, and societal capacities—all of which are in short supply in most low- and middle-income country cities that are experiencing growth while suffering vulnerabilities. We explore a few of the most obvious scenarios that India must consider in securing the adaptive capacities that it needs, fully recognizing that India is not the only national government whose response to capacity constraints and approach to capacity building “display[s] neither urgency nor scale” (OECD 2021).

Scenario 1: Limited Capacities (BAU)

We have already discussed the severely risky scenario that is BAU, also known as the do-nothing scenario. It is clearly untenable, and hugely risky, for India to allow the costs of inaction to mount at the rate that we have witnessed in the case of the NIP. The significant economic loss due to the opportunity costs of unbuilt infrastructure is compounded by the social costs linked to climate refugees and the impoverishment of those who are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Scenario 2: Incremental Capacity Building

India can also ill afford the incremental capacity-building efforts that are currently ongoing without forming a coherent and coordinated response to the challenge of low carbon growth. These efforts are scattered across numerous departments of government and are usually managed by Indian think tanks and nongovernmental organizations funded by philanthropy. Governments in India have not invested in the creation of any mechanism that creates a unified and consistent strategy for building adaptive capacity and improving the delivery of infrastructure and the management of urban development. This scenario is also untenable.

Scenario 3: Transforming Capacity

We return to the prospect that we mentioned in the introduction—that India's cities can become enablers of decarbonization—and we describe a scenario of transformation rather

than of inaction or incrementalism. We describe four imperatives for transforming the adaptive capacities in the country.

The first imperative is to recognize the potential for targeted and strategic investments in capacity building that can become a resource for the entire country. These investments need to be made in locations that offer the potential for scaling up, usually an outcome of investments in universities and centers of excellence. Lest these become mere academic centers, it is important to select locations that have vibrant economic activity and concentrations of skilled and talented human resources. An analysis of India's economic geography in 2014 has shown that eight high-performing states will account for 52% and forty-nine metropolitan clusters in 183 districts will account for about 77% of India's incremental GDP growth from 2012 to 2025. These clusters will also have 73% of India's income pool (McKinsey & Company 2014). Cities are a vehicle for mainstreaming climate action into all sectors of the economy, as centers of innovation that support start-ups that create hundreds of thousands of jobs in sectors as diverse as construction, green technology, and agriculture (Mani 2021). Such cities are the drivers of regional economies and are the magnets for migration and investment. Different states also respond differently to climate change,⁷ but diverse states are also home to diverse cities with vastly different carbon footprints (ICLEI-South Asia and British High Commission n.d.) and levels of resilience, often because of the building technologies in use locally. Though successful cities may be in regions that are languishing, the adaptation wedge can induce transformation in their economies by introducing green businesses and industries and training the local youth for green jobs. There is already evidence of such transformation in some regions of India.

The second imperative is to make capacity-building efforts relevant to the specific risks that motivate actors to build the adaptation wedges they need to deflect the growth trajectory in their specific contexts. Capacity building must create an understanding in all local actors about the need to understand and assess the risks they face, including the obvious loss and damage associated with assets and economic operations but also extending to the risks of reputational damage and failures of policies, markets, and technologies. Capacity building must target the understanding and skills required for scenario planning, life-cycle analysis, and ecosystem-wide risk management (Slade 2020).

The third imperative is to leverage innovation ecosystems, bringing together the combined power of local governments, business and industry, institutions, and civic communities. This “quadruple helix” has been illustrated in the blueprint of a digital National Urban Innovation Stack prepared by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs of the Government of India in 2019. In the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, the Working Group III on Urban Systems and Other Settlements has recommended that local governments should explore partnerships with other governments, networks, and stakeholders in order to tap the resources they need for their local projects (IPCC 2022). Such ecosystems—which can also be described as *city labs*—are also necessary to cover the full scope and potential for capacity building, which is currently limited to intermittent and uncoordinated events. In August 2023, the European Climate Adaptation Platform (Climate ADAPT) described the full breadth of capacity building for adaptation, which should comprise the following activities:

- Education (e.g., through schools, universities, and other education service providers)
- Training (e.g., courses, seminars, webinars, and e-learning)
- Networking (e.g., conferences, workshops, sharing platforms, communities of practice, and networks of excellence); specific coaching
- Technical assistance (e.g., expert missions and twinning)
- Attention of groups at risk

A recent research study regarding the learning needs of small- and medium-sized municipalities around the globe—also the bulk of India’s cities—finds that their understanding of the challenges and barriers of climate change adaptation “remains limited” (Fila, Fünfgeld, and Dahlmann 2023). They will therefore require the full breadth of capacity building, and given their limited resources, an ecosystems approach will be necessary. The Capacity Building Commission set up in 2021 has initiated a nationwide mapping of functions, roles, activities, and competencies required by all officers of government working at all levels of government in India. Once this activity is completed, it will provide information about the cohorts that require capacity building for infrastructure and urban development. Mapping the capacities of the private sector will remain a challenge, but new methods are emerging, such as the listing of suppliers of “green” services on the government e-marketplace.⁸ A quick sampling shows that, for example, 40 suppliers have registered to provide the service “Achieving Climate Action Targets.” There are other listings of suppliers for conducting water and energy audits and suchlike services.

The fourth imperative is to create the project-preparation facilities that have the capabilities required to design and deliver the infrastructure projects that can enhance India’s productivity and, consequently, its economic growth. Such facilities are required in all states of India and all metropolitan cities. This will entail a comprehensive stocktaking of the national and state-level capacities, institutional delivery mechanisms, and private-sector capabilities. A roundtable discussion between infrastructure experts organized at COP26 in 2021 concluded with the realization that new capacities will be required in every part of the product-delivery ecosystem to deliver large and complex projects “rapidly, cost effectively, and with a low carbon footprint.” To meet the heightened quality demands of investors, “owners or operators and engineering, construction, and specialty service providers will need to undertake organizational transformations” (McKinsey & Company 2022). Similar conclusions were reached by another roundtable that focused on decarbonizing the built environment. The G20 Global Infrastructure Hub’s “Infrastructure Monitor 2021” noted that “the bankability of an infrastructure project is mostly determined at the project-preparation stage and in almost all regions there is a need to improve project preparation capability. This is particularly the case in low-income countries.” This is particularly important because the costs related to project preparation are rising constantly because of new regulatory, technological, and ESG (environmental, social, and governance) requirements. Although the multilateral development banks have increased their support for project-preparation facilities in emerging economies since 2015, these are

usually tied to their lending programs. There is no recourse for countries like India but to focus attention on domestic needs and to support such facilities through domestic funds.

CONCLUSION

The defining characteristic of a wedge is the acute angle through which its force is fully exerted. In the case of India's emissions trajectory as depicted on a graph, the wedge marks a notional departure from business as usual. The wedge is, as such, a forceful combination of many such points of departure and innovation. It is formed of many wedges united by a fractal logic.

The adaptation wedge whose shape and size we have attempted to describe in this paper is meant as a metaphor for inspiring action on a subject that deserves much greater attention from researchers, institutions, and all organizations engaged in the broadly defined pursuit of human development, of which cities are an inseparable part. As centers of learning and innovation, universities are adaptation wedges by their nature, their impact deriving from their ability to respond to new needs and foster the innovations in knowledge, processes, and technologies that can cater to those needs.

Universities can initiate three actions that can immediately serve the larger causes and imperatives that have been described in this paper. First is to increase the numbers of professors of practice that bring the necessary balance of field experience to the scholarship that defines places of learning. Second, they should take the lead in establishing quality standards for professionals and scholars who must proliferate across the world to create the adaptation wedge. A lesson can be learnt from the alacrity with which the Association of Climate Change Officers (ACCO) has been created in the United States. The ACCO has already introduced the Certified Climate Change Professional (CC-P) credentialing system, an excellent example of the professional self-regulation and accreditation that maintains standards, advances best practice, and serves public interest. Third, universities need to form more, and more effective and productive, international networks that can move knowledge faster across borders. All universities should consider establishing transformation centers that become the vehicles for providing handholding through networks to all parts of the decarbonizing world. They can be the staging grounds for experimentation and, because many are in cities, can treat their host cities as test beds. Universities can choose to be the cutting edges or the fulcrums for the adaptation wedge; in either case, they must perform a seminal role in the transformation of sustainable and resilient cities.

NOTES

1. In 2018, the author chaired the Global Technology Watch Group on Sustainable Habitat, which was one of eight sectoral groups convened to produce reports presented at COP26. Not a single report is available on any website of the Indian government.
2. Energy Policy Simulator is a system dynamics model adapted for India in collaboration with Energy Innovation LLC and World Resources Institute India.

3. World Bank estimates based on the United Nations Population Division's World Urbanization Prospects 2018 Revision, referred on October 22, 2021.
4. Mission LiFE was added to India's updated NDC in August 2022 and is called a "mass movement" in the LT-LEDS.
5. Using a conversion rate in November 2023, whereby one crore Indian rupees (INR) equals roughly US\$133,514.
6. Status on April 2, 2023.
7. http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/india_report.pdf.
8. https://mkp.gem.gov.in/services#!/browse/services_home_hi07445547/open.

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***Notes on the Future Possibilities of Engaged Anthropological Research:
Why Decolonizing Anthropology Needs Black Diasporic Feminist
Theory and Methodologies***

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ABSTRACT

While in the past decade there have been more ethnographic accounts that shed light on minoritized stories and demystify the specific challenges that women and femmes² experience during their research, much is desired to prepare students and junior scholars from marginalized identities for fieldwork research. Reflecting on a moment of precarity in the context of pre-impeachment São Paulo, I explain why the integration of Black diasporic feminist thought, method, and praxis is critical to further decolonizing efforts in anthropology. Beyond reflection, this narrative calls for sustained politically active engagement to establish an anthropology of liberation.

KEY WORDS Anthropological Research; Black Diasporic Feminist Thought; Decolonizing; Brazil; Ethnographic Fieldwork Research

“*Fica ali, fica ali!*” Nelson³ tells me at the sight of a doorway. It is late in the afternoon on January 12, 2016. We are just a few city blocks east of Avenida Paulista and less than a block away from Rua da Consolação in São Paulo, Brazil. These are highly trafficked streets that have historically served as sites of popular protests for democratic rights. They also mark the starting point of São Paulo’s financial and commercial hubs. Normally, we would have access to the yellow line of the *metrô* (subway), but today is different. Considering the militarized police’s forceful response to civilian protests, cafes and other businesses that are typically opened until late have brought down their metal gates to protect their windows and merchandise. Upon encountering a bloodied white protester, we approach them to see if they need help. They decline and, along with their friends, explain

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Sections of this essay have been published for the American Ethnological Society. Thank you to Dr. Amarilys Estrella, and special thanks to Verónica Sousa, Dr. Magdalena Zegarra Chiappori, Sara Fall, Dr. Nelson Novaes Pedroso Junior, Dr. Kaifa Roland, Dr. Jason Scott, Dr. Lindsay Ofrias, Dr. William Lempert, Mónica Perry, and Lorena Mena for comments on earlier drafts of this article. Thank you to Dr. Rajiv Thakur and the editorial team of the *Midwest Social Sciences Journal*.

to us that the military police (MP) were throwing stun grenades and tear gas and closing off passage to streets. Moments later, we hear rocks hitting the pavement and see a stone, brick-size, pound the street just a few feet from us. We both shriek. Nelson spots a closed shop and instructs me to stand there for cover against the frame of a doorway. We hear more rocks, and I instinctively hold on to his arm.

We stand there for a few minutes before Nelson approaches an MP walking by. Nelson explains that we are not protesters but rather are on our way home from the museum and simply trying to reach the subway. The MP sizes us up and tells Nelson to be careful because we could easily be mistaken for protesters. It seems odd to me that he warns us about future misidentification by other MPs yet does little to ensure our safety. Additionally, the fumes from the tear gas that MPs have thrown have already begun to sting our eyes and scratch our throats. The MP, who is still standing nearby and is himself holding a tear gas bomb, turns to us and gives us instructions on how to best cover our faces before walking away.

Moments later, a second set of young male-presenting protesters approaches our street with their hands up, and to our dismay, a handful of MPs respond by drawing weapons. A wave of fear comes over me. Nelson and I exchange words—though I cannot now remember what was said—and he tries to calm me down because I am becoming visibly agitated. We both crouch down. Additionally, my ordinarily very cool and relaxed friend is starting to show signs of panic, and as I feel his distress and my own, I think, *Shit, really? This is how it ends?* I freeze while the police shout and walk toward the protesters, who have stopped moving and still have their hands raised above their heads in surrender. The police eventually march the protesters further east and out of sight.

After another hour of waiting, taking cover underground in a parking garage, listening to the sounds of helicopters overhead and the weapons of war used against peaceful protesters, we finally do make it home, and we debrief over dinner with Nelson's partner, Rogério. We speak about how lucky we have been to make it back home in one piece and how *foolish* we have been to have walked in the direction of the heart of the demonstration. We had completely forgotten that Movimento Passe Livre (MPL) had called for a peaceful assembly that day to protest the recent increase in public transit fares, in addition to other austerity measures that were further choking both the working and middle classes who rely on public transportation to get to work and move about in a city of more than 7 million cars. MPL is an anti-capitalist, autonomous, people-centered nationwide social movement that has been growing in hundreds of cities throughout Brazil since 1999. Through collective action, MPL labors for the right to free, non-privatized, publicly funded, high-quality mass transportation for all. Although we both would ordinarily attend such an event, that day, we had decided to take a break from our usual routine and spent the afternoon at the Museum of Art in São Paulo—another popular site where Leftist activists often congregate.

When I get home that night, I turn to my field notebook to reflect on a lot of things. I wonder what would have happened to me—a jeans-and-t-shirt- and sneaker-wearing female-presenting Black Dominican American with typical African phenotypes⁴—had I not been accompanied by a light-skinned middle-class Brazilian man. I certainly would not have had the gall to approach the police for help during a

protest. What would it be like to share Nelson's conviction that we had a right to walk on the streets, peacefully assemble, and dare to approach law enforcement without reason to fear?⁵ In general, it is no secret that the MPs are notorious for usually targeting dark-skinned and/or poor people typically of African descent. Historically, the Left-leaning white middle classes experienced a similar type of violence during Brazil's last military dictatorship era. The MPs' excessive use of force, including the use of torture, often results in death and at times the dismemberment and disappearance of those in their custody (Amparo Alves 2014; Caldeira 2000; Conectas Direitos Humanos 2017; Costa Vargas 2008; Goldstein 2013; Holston 2008; Huggins, Haritos-Fatouros, and Zimbaro 2002; Smith 2021; Wacquant 2003). For nonlethal police crimes, the MP also have a record of sexually assaulting transgender and cisgender women they apprehend—a reality that mirrors the record of our own police in the United States. (Davis 2000; Ritchie 2017). In that regard, while a different cultural, political, and geographical context, the commonalities with the experiences of Black and Brown people in police interactions in the United States are eerily similar.⁶ The incidents of that afternoon also reassured me that though I had shifted the focus of my research from more-visible forms of social protests and activism in defense of Black lives to less-visible types of social protest—specifically, prisoners' rights activism—it was ultimately the right choice for me to make. As in the United States, Brazil's incarcerated women and gender nonconforming individuals are the Other victims and survivors of anti-Black police violence—a population that continues to grow steadily despite reforms and regardless of what political party is in power, as I explain in my doctoral thesis (Mena 2018).

I had witnessed numerous protests during my fieldwork, organized by both the Left and the Right. I was grateful that I had not encountered the protest alone as I had previously done. Although social protests are a sign of a healthy democracy, some of the more visible protests I observed shortly after my arrival in February 2015 left me ill at ease, as they included calls to impeach then Workers' Party president Dilma Rousseff, to jail then-former Workers' Party president Inácio "Lula" da Silva, and to bring back military rule. This trifecta of political maneuvering was nearly entirely successful. In April 2016, members of the Brazilian senate—many of whom were themselves under investigation for corruption and money laundering—illegally impeached President Rousseff. Then, beginning in April 2018, former president Lula was imprisoned for 580 days on trumped-up charges of corruption, to pave the way for the October 2018 election of far-right pro-military politician Jair Bolsonaro. A confluence of factors, including a gross mismanagement of the COVID-19 pandemic, led to Bolsonaro's defeat in his bid for reelection in October 2022 to President Lula.

In 2016, the excessive displays of military power at prodemocracy protests created a chaotic atmosphere that was deeply unnerving. In addition to the pungent fumes from tear gas, the frequency and noise produced by stun grenades released by the MP added to the sense of danger imposed upon protesters and passersby. Tear gas is a chemical agent prohibited from being used in war by the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1997.⁷ Via the police, the government created a state of emergency because of the imagined threat of a collective organizing to expose the real threats that socioeconomic injustices create for an already exploited lower class. Under a truly democratic state, is it

possible to imagine how that protest may have played out if participants had held their rallies and marched for a few hours without the presence of police? Or, at minimum, rather than be targeted by the police, what if participants had been protected by the police? What if they had been able to hold the protest without any bloodshed, intimidation, or exposure to toxic chemicals?

These same questions can be asked of protesters in the United States. Indeed, if we briefly reflect on the past 10 years of social protest in the United States, a similar pattern emerges of repressive anti-democratic tactics—whether under an openly fascist administration or not. In 2014, under the Democratic Party’s administration, for instance, the police in Ferguson also bombarded protesters with tear gas and pepper spray during their public demonstrations against police violence. Police also used excessive force during the anti-police brutality protests of 2020, some of which were documented by protesters on social media and in news outlets that dared to discuss why yet another Black death during another public health nightmare had brought so many people to the streets.

In addition to asking why these similar tactics are being used to disperse crowds—often before any actual “riot” ensues—anthropologists in particular, and academics more broadly, must be part of the political conversations and actions to impede these measures from being used in the United States and elsewhere. In the spring of 2024, we once again witnessed the trampling of democratic rights of protests on college campuses, but at a much grander scale than we had experienced previously in this century. In New York City, college administrators at Columbia University and at City College at the City University of New York, for example, not only used campus police on peaceful students gathered in support of a cease-fire in Palestine but also worked with the city’s mayor to deploy militarized police against students. In an interview with journalist Amy Goodman (2024), the Palestinian anthropologist Nadia Abu El-Haj, along with other Columbia faculty, showcased a powerful example of this intervention by showing up for their students in the aftermath of violent police repression that left many students physically injured, including Jewish student organizers in the encampment. When Goodman asked about students who claim to feel unsafe in response to the presence of peaceful encampments, Dr. Abu El-Haj makes a clear distinction between *feeling* and *being* unsafe and, in doing so, engages in the critical care work that attends to the needs of all Columbia students. Showing up for students in this way reflects an intersectional decolonial feminist praxis that centers the needs of the collective beyond the boundaries of a classroom and exposes the myth of hallowed academic halls.

In what follows, I draw attention to my subject position in the city of São Paulo, where I conducted research from February 2015 through March 2017 on the policing, criminalizing, and incarceration of women and gender nonconforming individuals. Though São Paulo is not a majority-Black city, the demographics of the prison population are overwhelmingly *preto, pobre, e periférico*: Black, poor, and from the peripheral neighborhoods in and outside the city. I make the case for the need for Black diasporic feminist thought (Perry 2009), method, praxis, and the citing of Black women/femme (Smith and Garrett-Scott 2021) scholars for an “anthropology of liberation” (Harrison 1997). These theoretical and methodological approaches attend to the risks that Black ethnographers manage in spaces marked with socioeconomic inequalities that are linked to

anti-Black violence. I submit that academic discourse on the condition of racially marginalized populations must necessarily recognize the limits of fieldwork, specifically the ways in which institutional violence are interconnected to the everyday violence that ethnographers are also subjected to, both at home and in their research sites.⁷

This article contributes to existing calls to action that build on the work of anthropologists and activists, often on the margins, who have long argued for critical research and civic engagement rather than the still-problematic cannibal research that defines U.S. American anthropology and which scholars and interlocutors from the Global South rightly point out as opportunistic at best and another manifestation of neocolonial/settler colonialism at worst. I draw from Black diasporic feminist thought (BDFT)⁸ to critically reflect on our role in the production of knowledge and in the representation of people directly affected by violence, including anthropologists who are members of marginalized populations. BDFT is a set of interdisciplinary theoretical critical race, gender, and sexuality studies and civically engaged tools in service to the complex experiences of the Black diaspora within and outside the borders of the United States. To this end, my analysis is in conversation with other scholars who integrate BDFT and praxis in ethnographic methods. Finally, I briefly revisit decolonial research methods to contend that engaging anthropology through these lenses reimagines the possibilities of a discipline committed to decolonial theory and praxis while upholding Black liberation as a requirement for that process.

TO BE BLACK, FEMALE, AND RELATIVELY CONSCIOUS IN PUBLICLY CONTESTED SPACES

Writing about her field experiences in Jamaica, where structural and everyday violence are also a reality, the Black Jamaican American anthropologist Bianca Williams (2009:158) explains that for women ethnographers,

our stories are silenced too often. The struggles and trials that women anthropologists must endure and overcome to get access to some of the same field sites and data as our male counterparts are almost never discussed, leaving our graduate students unprepared to deal with these issues as they arise while on the frontlines of research.

While in the last two decades there have been more ethnographic accounts that shed light on our stories and demystify the specific challenges that women and femmes experience during their research,⁹ much is desired to prepare graduate students and junior scholars from marginalized identities for fieldwork research. We often get these stories long after we have completed our data collection and analysis, not only because of conventions of what is acceptable knowledge to disseminate but also because the assembly line from fieldwork to employment (precarious or otherwise) does not allow for the necessary pause, reflection, and exchange that would actually require us to come to address in community, and with culturally appropriate resources, the harm we have come to learn about.

In São Paulo, a city of 11 million people, women of African descent, dark-skinned people in particular, and other marginalized populations have a fraught relationship with the militarized police that typically patrol the streets. For instance, according to Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais (ANTRA), because of high rates of unemployment, 90% of transgender women, a majority of whom are Black, engage in sex work to make ends meet (Benevides and Nogueira 2020).¹⁰ Despite sex work being decriminalized in Brazil, one of their main perpetrators is the military police. Police are not a source of security and protection, much less agents of justice.

Grassroots activists, such as the Coletivo Mães de Maio—Mothers of May Collective—led by Afro-Brazilian activist Débora da Silva, are another case in point of people from marginalized identities who repeatedly denounce police violence and the failure of the state to protect their communities. The Mães have been laboring hard since 2007 to expose and end the excessive and lethal use of force by the police in São Paulo and throughout Brazil (Amparo Alves 2018; Amparo Alves and Silva 2018; Global Network of Mothers in Resistance 2018; González 2021). In May 2006, along with dozens of families, da Silva lost her adult son as part of a police massacre that claimed the lives of four hundred youths from the periphery of Santos, a coastal city in the state of São Paulo. While da Silva and the other mothers have not received the international attention that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) or #SayHerName movements in the United States have, their experience of surviving police abuse, and their public mourning to call for justice are legible to other Black mothers in the diaspora and Indigenous people in Latin America and the United States who have experienced similar forms of police violence. In collaboration with mothers from Colombia, Chicago, and Anaheim, for instance, the mothers have organized to support each other and to call for justice in these respective international communities where anti-Blackness, anti-Indigenous, and white supremacy still dictate whose life has value. Knowledge of these social movements is facilitated through traditional modes of activism as well as through social media, where the visibility of protests and other acts of resistance in support of Black life—whether on Brazilian soil or elsewhere around the globe—has been nothing short of transformative for directly affected populations.

It was the public activism of these mourning mothers from Brazil that led me to conduct fieldwork in São Paulo in 2015. I had learned about the Mães from working-class Leftist activists in 2012 when I conducted preliminary research in São Paulo on former political prisoners of the dictatorship era in Brazil (1964–1985). The fact that the dictatorship had not ended for Brazil's Black and impoverished population¹¹ and that it was underreported in international news disturbed me profoundly. Over the next couple of years, I learned more about how pervasive anti-Black state violence was in present-day Brazil, and the critical role that social movements played in shedding light on the realities for Black folks in this so-called racial democracy. When I returned to Brazil in 2015 for dissertation research, I initially followed the social movements led by the Mães around this very question of the excessive use of police force and violence in working-class communities in São Paulo (both in the periphery and in the city center). After participating in a handful of protests, however, I realized that a project of this sort, in which I was attending protests as an individual and not a member of an activist collective or participatory research team, would put me at considerable personal risk. Even in protests

that had more of a carnivalesque atmosphere, such as the presence of children and people playing live samba music, dancing, wearing costumes, sharing food, and more, the unpredictability of MP behavior was not something I could easily ignore.

Throughout the 20th century, Brazil experienced a series of periods of military dictatorships. Its most recent and arguably most pernicious iteration was from 1964 to 1985, with hundreds of Brazilians disappeared and murdered by the state, and thousands detained and tortured, for espousing Leftist beliefs. Former president Rouseff, for instance, was in custody and tortured for three years when she was a college student. Under Lula's (2003–2010) and Rouseff's (2011–2016) Workers' Party (Partido do Trabalhador, PT) administrations, there were national projects, including the establishing of truth commissions, to recover the official history and memory of the military era. Additionally, there had been an acknowledgment of the state's role in perpetuating violence—the ramifications of which could still be felt in many sectors of Brazilian civil society, especially the militarized police. Official narratives of the military era and Brazil often make visible the targeting of white middle-class political dissidents. Among Leftist organizations, this representation is then juxtaposed to highlight the present-day prisoners—a vast majority of whom are of African descent or are Indigenous—as political, too. Black Brazilian feminists (Carneiro 2016; Gonzalez 1995; Nascimento in Smith 2016) have argued, however, that the policing and criminalizing of Black people in Brazil did not begin in the post-military dictatorship era but rather is part of the backbone of nation-building projects in Brazil dating back to the mass transatlantic enslavement of people from western and southern Africa. Stated differently, whether part of official narratives or not, Black bodies in Brazil have always been subjected to state violence.

As I became familiar with São Paulo's urban landscape, I noticed, as well, the color line of these nationalist protests. I soon learned to avoid these crowds mainly constituted by white and light-skinned Brazilians wearing the colors of the flag—green, yellow, and dark blue—particularly if I wore red, which would easily identify me as a supporter of the PT¹² regardless of my actual political leanings. Beyond observing the obvious racial-class-color lines, I noted, as well, the presence of heavily armed military police and their vehicles, including military tanks unabashedly supporting nationalist protesters.¹³ In contrast, when the MP show up at prodemocracy protests, they generally intimidate, prohibit movement, or enact violence against protesters regardless of their race, coloring, gender, or age, though, as I noted above, they typically mistreat Brazilians of African descent or those who reveal their social class through their clothing.

The fact that President Rouseff was impeached in April 2016 and that Lula was detained in April 2018, both without sufficient evidence of wrongdoing, marked politically charged and volatile moves that the ultra-Right parties were able to achieve within a relatively short time frame.¹⁴ Within this period as well, it is important to note the assassination of the lesbian Afro-Brazilian sociologist and council member Marielle Franco, who had been elected in October 2017 and started her term in January 2018 in the state of Rio de Janeiro for the Party for Socialism and Liberation. Along with her driver, Anderson Pedro Gomes, Franco was shot and killed on March 14, 2018. Her death matters for numerous reasons,¹⁵ including that she was investigating and denouncing recent government-ordered MP operations in Rio de Janeiro's shantytowns where civilians were

often caught in the crosshairs of police and gang shootings. Although her assassins—both former members of the military police—were arrested in 2019 and have direct links to former president Bolsonaro, the mishandling of evidence by the authorities has been ignored and questions surrounding *who* ordered her murder persist. Not unlike our own election of the fascist presidency of the Trump administration in 2016, the election of Bolsonaro in October 2018 marked Brazil's ultra-Right's rise to power. Given his open bigotry and disdain for anything that is not cisgender, heteronormative, white, male, and rich, many Brazilians refer to Bolsonaro, an ex-military officer, as "Trump, but with guns." With good reason, Brazilians were also concerned with his resultant policies to put more guns into the hands of Brazilian citizens.

Prior to President Rousseff's illegal impeachment, there were already signs of social unrest linked to austerity measures. In 2015 and 2016, calls for social protests and *atos*—actions—from the organized Left circulated via social media among grassroots activists, independent journalists, and their supporters. In addition to the MPL action this article opens with, another poignant example occurred in December 2015, when high school students in São Paulo led protests in response to then-Governor Alckmin's closure of hundreds of high schools throughout the state. Some of these young protesters were met by a brutal police force. While a few daily papers published images of police repression, some of the most vivid reporting was documented on Facebook. Two examples of police misconduct against Black female-presenting individuals that stand out from this time were the sexual assault and use of racial epithets during the arrest of a Black student protester¹⁶ and the violent arrest of a Black woman who was passing by the site of an occupied school in the middle-class neighborhood of Pinheiros and was thus assumed to be a protester.¹⁷ The relative silence in the media about how Black Brazilians experienced these state-sponsored acts of violence is precisely why anthropological engagement with current events as they are happening is critical to the communities we are embedded in as part of our ethnographic research. Approaching our work in this way would provide an invaluable resource to the communities we connect with in the field and to the communities we interpret for back at home. In an era when misinformation is rampant, at minimum, disseminating a cogent analysis of public events or collaborating with independent journalists is both critical and responsible scholarship.¹⁸ The moral imperative to share factual information to the broader public should not have to wait until academic work published in an academic platform shows up on more-visible and -accessible spaces years after the fact. I am not presenting anything new to U.S. anthropologists who self-describe as activists or public intellectuals; indeed, in the past two decades, social media has been instrumental in sharing our work and activism and in exchanging knowledge beyond the academy.¹⁹ I am certainly not presenting anything novel to scholars in the Global South who have long since worn multiple hats as scholars who also serve the public in other tangible ways. What I am calling for, though, is more widespread engagement and citational practices with methodological tools informed by Black diasporic feminist thought, and the use of accessible media platforms to make anthropological knowledge available to wider audiences. I will develop this point further in the next section.

BLACK DIASPORIC FEMINIST THOUGHT AND DECOLONIZED RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

As Faye Harrison (1991:88) astutely argued more than 30 years ago, the “construction of an ‘anthropology of liberation’ to subvert the established discipline and lay the foundation for a new field of inquiry must be based on conscious political choices about standing on the side of struggle and transformation.” Here, she builds on the work of Magubane and Faris (1985), who call for the destruction of a “rationalist and intellectual tradition” inextricably linked with (neo)colonialism that, contrary to liberal beliefs, could not simply excise its problematic elements (Harris 1991:88). Harrison (1991) identifies decolonizing efforts in anthropology as beginning in the late 1960s, when scholars began to center discussions on the politics of domination that shaped the discipline. Building on the scholarship of Delmos Jones (1970) and Diane Lewis (1973), she also underscores why the unique epistemologies of “native” scholars from the Global North and Global South could contribute to decolonizing anthropological knowledge—critical steps for a larger project of liberation in anthropology (Harrison 1991:88).²⁰

In her keynote address at the American Anthropological Association (AAA) annual meeting in 2021, Harrison returned to this point, providing a rich and textured pronouncement of the critical work from scholars in the Global South, including the geographical areas where she has focused her research during the span of her multidecade career: Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States. While it is about damn time Harrison is given her flowers,²¹ the fact that it has taken three decades for the AAA to acknowledge what was once a trailblazing approach that has now become ubiquitous within and outside of academia should give us pause. This, indeed, is a moment of reckoning among anthropologists who have benefited from the silencing of Black feminist theories and the scholarship of other minoritized Indigenous perspectives. As Dani Merriman (2021) notes in her reflections of the state of the discipline:

Anthropology—like many other disciplines, institutions, and individuals—started to shake itself awake from its academic slumber. For decades, critiques within anthropology have theorized the need to dismantle colonial pasts and present. But the culmination of social, political, and climatic crises in the past year has demanded that anthropologists—especially white anthropologists—confront the deadly gaps between our theoretical frameworks and the world we inhabit.

I want to push this important critique further to say there is also a need to reflect on what that silencing or trivializing²² of marginalized voices has meant for anthropology. This is a moment to awaken but also to grieve and to consider what we, as a discipline, lose in the wake of disregarding minoritized perspectives and, by extension, the lives of Black and Indigenous peoples in particular. Merriman’s analysis also helps answer the question, Why among the social sciences is anthropology—the study of humankind—so white? Within the harms these exclusionary practices have engendered are the myriad missed

opportunities to, as Black feminism suggests, cocreate with our interlocutors equitable and sustainable solutions to social issues that result from the enduring effects of colonialism, such as anti-Blackness, and racial capitalism more broadly.

Though Harrison (1991:90) does not identify Black feminist standpoint as such in this work, she advocates its main tenets when she states that “anthropologists with *multiple consciousness* and vision have a strategic role to play in the struggle for a decolonized science of humankind” (emphasis in the original). For Harrison, a decolonized discipline would also signify a democratic one that recognizes the central roles that marginalized anthropologists play in the production of knowledge. She calls for “responsible” field research, which entails self-awareness as well as being conscious of the political situation in which one does fieldwork and the political currency that ethnographic data can have. Indeed, since Harrison’s call to decolonize the discipline, scholars utilizing feminist and decolonized anthropological methodologies have encouraged ethnographers to reflect on their research motivations and goals and their larger institutional implications. Take, for instance, Deborah Gordon’s (1995) description of “oppositional research” in the classic anthology *Women Writing Culture*. Oppositional research is an approach that she sees as “traveling along an alternate route” that works against the corporatization of the academy through its specific inclusion of “cultural studies, queer theory, science and technology studies, anthropology at home, and mass-media studies” (Gordon 1995:430). At its core, decolonized anthropology is informed by Black feminist thought (Allen and Jobson 2016), critical of various institutions of power in the West, including the neoliberalization of the academy (Navarro 2017). For the Māori scholar Linda T. Smith (1999), part of the decolonizing project is precisely to decenter the dominant Western academy, and, rather than write about Indigenous knowledge systems, to make space so Indigenous voices are neither marginalized nor discredited. These frameworks are *still* important for those of us from marginalized identities who are involved in research where the political and social stakes are high and who are linked to institutions teaching anthropology or leveraging anthropological theory and praxis in applied settings.

This critical self-reflection is precisely what scholars from subordinated communities in the United States have written about, especially because at times we find parallel institutional and cultural mechanisms of power governing the marginalized communities whose lives we document. For many Black anthropologists like me who study the effects of institutional violence on Black folks, there is little to no distinction between fieldwork and the issues we grapple with in our home communities. For instance, although I have no familial ties to Brazil, I have direct links to the carceral state as the family member of several formerly detained individuals²³ and as someone who survived public high school in New York City where an Administration for Children Services (ACS)-appointed social worker with a white savior complex²⁴ and no real understanding of the lives of Black, Afro- and Indigenous Latinx, and South Asian first-generation kids sought to assimilate my peers and me to the white middle-class dominant culture, especially as we transitioned to majority-white universities in New York. In this white supremacist framing disguised as self-help and upward mobility, eschewing our BIPOC cultural identities, and at times breaking relational ties with our families, was presented as the only way we would be able to succeed in college, escape the violence of poverty, and hold stable white-collar, long-

term employment.²⁵ As I have written elsewhere (2024), I echo Black Dominican sociologist Jomaira Salas Pujols (2020) when I say that I mourn the years of my late adolescence and early adulthood: the Black Dominican carefree girl I could have been, and the relationships I lost along the way. My experiences are not unique, but rather part of larger systemic issues that affect Black communities and communities of color in so-called diverse and liberal cities, such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco.²⁶ Salas Pujols, who is also a member of the Black Latinas Know Collective (BLKC), examines the intersections of school injustice and Black girlhood in the United States. In her powerful essay published on BLKC's website, she reflects on her growing-up experiences as an immigrant from the Dominican Republic in the United States. She discusses how school served as the site where she and other select assimilable minoritized people were groomed to perform for white liberal fantasies to save (and culturally whiten) the children. Being "chosen" under these parameters protected us from the alternative—being criminalized *and* punished—yet resulted in profound loss and trauma nonetheless.

To be clear, the alternative is extremely grim. Full stop. In the context of Brazil, when I carried out research, the more I engaged with incarcerated women and gender nonconforming people—many of whom were youth experiencing social death—the more I understood that I could have easily been behind bars in the United States rather than in the privileged position of studying these issues. This insight shaped my fieldwork experience and indelibly informed how I approached the remainder of my time in Brazil, my choice to publish in Brazilian Portuguese first for Instituto Terra, Trabalho, e Cidadania²⁷—an organization that is committed to ending incarceration and supporting people detained in female penitentiaries in Brazil—and how I wrote my dissertation. First-time long-term researchers might learn a thing or two about themselves during fieldwork, but the realization that in the eyes of their home communities/country of origin, they are rendered as disposable is not typically part of the narratives we read about in ethnographic accounts. Despite my adverse young adulthood experiences, conducting research in female penitentiaries was never part of my original proposal or intention in carrying out fieldwork in Brazil. Rather, I was made aware of the need for visitors to provide support to women detained in prisons where there were high rates of suicide and depression, including among the population detained with their newborn children.²⁸

While I was attending the rallies and town halls where members of *Mães de Maio* were present and spoke, Débora da Silva specifically would mention the fact that people imprisoned were on the other side of the same coin of police violence. Though scholarly and activist attention was rightly focused on the victims of police violence, detainees were not necessarily being framed as victims or survivors of police violence.²⁹ In Brazil, attention to the experiences of incarcerated women, gender nonconforming individuals, and transgender men was also growing as prisoners' rights activists, including formerly detained individuals, labored in service for their communities: participating in daylong seminars to educate law students, scholars, and the public on the realities of prison life. In Brazil, as in the United States, prisoners' rights activists and scholars, such as the former political prisoner and world-renowned Black feminist philosopher Angela Davis, have pointed to the need for more focused scholarship and abolitionist action,³⁰ not only for the sake of these overpoliced and punished communities but also because a police state is not

bound to prison walls. Indeed, it spills over to other aspects of civic and personal life, such as in schools and universities, and how we interact with and regard or “police” each other.³¹ Considering that the race to incarcerate a largely Black, impoverished, female/femme, and/or queer population shows no signs of slowing down in Brazil and around the globe, I support and cannot amplify enough calls for abolition and an anthropology that attends to these issues. I suggest that civic engagement through sustained mobilization and organizing among academics to defund police³² (including campus police) follow the lead of and cocreate with affected communities liberatory policies that respect Black and Brown life. Additionally, this would necessarily require providing oversight to implementation of regulations that protect Black liberation. I evoke the Combahee River Collective ([1977] 2001) when I say that in the 21st century, an anthropology that wants liberation for all will have to recognize that if “Black [transgender] women are free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression.”³³

In short, research that engages with institutional violence at home and in our research sites will further the aims of decolonizing anthropology, yet there is a need to recognize that a decolonizing framework does not, as Smith (1999) argued, prevent someone from dying. As Dána-Ain Davis (2019) notes in her ethnography on the racism driving premature births and high infant and maternal morbidity rates in the United States, decolonial research—informed by Black feminist thought—needs to be reconstituted with active, radical, theoretical, and methodological approaches. I build on this to say that a Black diasporic feminist decolonizing framework is not static. It is a process that, when social movements, such as Black Lives Matter, #SayHerName, or *Mães de Maio* emerge, provides U.S. anthropologists in the 2020s with an opportunity to work diligently to mitigate the suffering of Others affected by the confluence of anti-Black and anti-women/femme continuum of violence that ranges from institutional to everyday, to police, to interpersonal. To be sure, I am not suggesting all anthropologists become activists in the service of Black communities around the globe.³⁴ I am stating, however, that anti-oppression movements happening at home and in our research sites *should* be an extension of the research and pedagogical approaches of all anthropologists. Beyond Black populations, this would include other communities that have been and continue to be devalored in the aftermath of settler colonialism and the colonality of gender (Lugones 2007; Mendez 2015).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The experiences of Black women ethnographers in the field shed light on the significance of attending to an intersectionality of identities, including the researcher’s social identities, skin color, and other racialized phenotypes.³⁵ I contend that these identity-based situations could also mobilize anthropologists in positions of privilege to further efforts towards decolonizing anthropology as conceptualized by scholars, such as Faye Harrison, who understand that this mobilization would be a critical part of efforts to create an anthropology of liberation.

As Ruth Behar (1996:5) eloquently expresses, “Nothing is stranger than this business of humans observing other humans in order to write about them.” To which I would add this: And nothing is stranger than writing about the endangered lives of humans in our research sites (which we should absolutely continue to do) without an engagement of parallel social and political conditions taking place at home that pose a threat to marginalized people, including colleagues who share those social identities. One of the first things I was taught as a graduate student at CU Boulder is that, in addition to the plethora of ethnographic tools we have available to us, we, too, are our method.³⁶ Anthropologists will yield distinct data because we have different subjectivities. This fact is a strength in anthropology; however, it is striking to see how trivialized nonnormative subjectivities are within our discipline, particularly in departments where we might be the only individual from a marginalized social identity.³⁷

A decade ago, Tami Navarro, Bianca Williams, and Attiya Ahmad (2013) made recommendations to make space for women of color anthropologists at the proverbial anthropological table to engage in these difficult yet critical conversations around marginalization, privilege, and access. Although their incisive article focused on the experiences of junior faculty, I want to extend that conversation to include students because, as many of us who share a marginalized social identity know, these systemic forms of discrimination within the academy do not begin after we have obtained a PhD (Duhé 2019). There needs to be more conversation around privilege and access within our discipline that includes the voices of marginalized individuals related to their academic and fieldwork experiences and that furthermore connects social and economic issues taking place globally to our present identity politics in the United States, such as multiethnic student-led encampments in support of a ceasefire in Palestine and Israel, and other life-affirming social movements.

I want to close with the provocation gaining momentum in decolonial intersectional feminists spaces: that we Black womxn and members of other Othered identities abandon the proverbial anthropological table. For those who have been Othered: Take up space where our liberation and our whole selves are welcomed. For those of us who are Black, let’s unabashedly continue to commune with the *Orixás*, our ancestors, and the other Undrowned.³⁸ Let’s create spaces of liberation (Azor 2017) and knowledge exchange that are life-affirming. And let’s resist the grind culture (Hersey 2022) inherent in the capitalistic logics that also shape the neoliberal academy.

NOTES

1. In this article I turn to AfroIndigenous (Zapotec) poet Dr. Alán Pelaez López’s (2018) articulation of women and femmes:

By women, I am referring to those who are identified as women by Western society (not just self-identified women), which includes cisgender women, trans women, trans men experiencing intentional targeted violence from transphobic cultures, gender nonconforming people who

have their nonconformity questioned and erased and identifies [*sic*] as “women,” butch women who some families—like the one I grew up in—will violently identify as “women who don’t want to grow up,” and third, fourth and fifth gendered NDNs who the state will not recognize. By *femmes*, I am referring to the sissies, the cry babies, those of us who chose adornment as a reminder that we are worthy, the quiet ones whose introvertness is taken as “passive” and therefore feminine, those who perform taken-for-granted labor, those of us who must hold the world before we can hold ourselves, and those of us whose gender is just that: *femme*.

2. Nelson is a biologist and human ecologist who has collaborated on projects with fishing communities in the Amazon and with Quilombolas and Indigenous communities throughout Brazil. Over the past several years, he has worked to document the socioeconomic impacts and human rights violations of the Samarco mine tailing collapse in 2015, the worst socio-environmental disaster in Brazilian history. See the report Nelson organized and coauthored with a team of researchers: Fundação Getúlio Vargas (2020).
3. As Dr. Bailey Duhé (2022) argues in her dissertation about racial mixture in the United States among Creoles of Louisiana, race is fluid. I am a mixed-race Black Dominican with light brown skin in the northern colder climates. As with other melanated humans of the African Diaspora, my skin is never just one color. Indeed, when I lived in the more-than-a-mile-high town of Boulder, Colorado, prior to fieldwork in Brazil, I had a permanent tan that deepened to a brown-red as I approached the equator or when I was exposed to prolonged sunlight in the summer months. Beyond skin color, I have dark brown eyes and kinky dark brown hair that I typically wear natural in a simple updo or in braids. My choice to wear my hair naturally often excludes me from being identified as a Black Dominican American/Latinx in the United States. In São Paulo, however, unless I spoke Portuguese, regardless of how I wore my hair, I was assumed to be a local.
4. I recall one antiwar protest in New York City many years ago where police descended on a group of African American men who were participating in civil disobedience. I was not part of their group but rather was in proximity, simply observing what was going on and trying to locate the rallying point along with a friend of mine, a woman of South Asian descent. Once again, we were lucky that two fellow protesters, Minnie Bruce Pratt and the late Leslie Feinberg, quickly stepped in front of us, allowing us to move away from what was becoming a tense situation between police and Black protestors and protesters of color. Neither Pratt nor Feinberg knew who we were—but as I was familiar with their work, I was both moved by the fearlessness and kindness they showed to us and in awe that the politics in their writings matched their activism in real life. Rest in power, Leslie!

5. This is in no small part because of our shared European colonial histories, including systematic genocide against Indigenous peoples of the Americas and the slow death through chattel slavery of the Indigenous peoples of Africa.
6. See Haar et al. (2017). See also Feigenbaum (2017).
7. See also Curiel (2016).
8. See, for example, Huggins and Glebbeek (2009).
9. The National Association of *Travestis* and Transsexuals.
10. See Wacquant (2003).
11. Though in large part because of my racial features and coloring, most Brazilians would assume that I am a *petista*, as PT supporters are called.
12. Images abound of MP protecting and conversing with, and holding babies of, nationalist protesters.
13. See the Oscar-nominated film *The Edge of Democracy*, by Petra Costa, which details the events leading up to the fall of the Workers' Party and the weakening of the democratic state in Brazil.
14. See Mena (2019).
15. See Mena (2019).
16. A quick Google search from this period highlights the obscenity of the excessive use of force from the military police in Brazil against urban youth there.
17. Recent initiatives at the American Anthropological Association (AAA), such as partnering with the OpEd Project to provide AAA members scholarships to participate in workshops to learn how to write or to improve op-ed writing skills, further underscore the significance of increasing the number of anthropologists participating in this form of civic engagement and responsibility.
18. The brilliant podcast *Zora's Daughters*, created by two Black women anthropology graduate students, Brendane Tynes and Alyssa A. L. James, is part of the growing public anthropology content in service of knowledge dissemination beyond academia. Increasingly, too, calls for "flash ethnography" are being normalized. My gratitude to Dr. Ritu Khanduri for introducing me to the term.
19. These authors not only preceded the "interpretive turn" in our discipline but also show us an example of the type of allyship that our discipline still desperately needs. (See also Deloria [1944] 1998 and Hurston [1938] 1990.)
20. Black transgender women from the United States rightly argue that they should be given their flowers while still living.
21. Here, I invoke the late Michel-Rolph Trouillot's critiques of the silences that inform official accounts of history, its links to power, and the production of knowledge. See Trouillot (1995).
22. As prison activists around the globe argue, when one family member is incarcerated, the entire family is incarcerated, which must make us consider what the terrorizing, policing, and detaining of Black, Latinx, Muslim, and other undesirable people do for their respective communities.
23. Think Michelle Pfeiffer's character in *Dangerous Minds* or Savannah Shange's real-life depiction of the white liberal teacher in her brilliant ethnography *Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Antiblackness, and Schooling in San Francisco*. Excerpts from

- this section have been published in the anthology *Harmonizing Latina Visions and Voices: Cultural Explorations of Entornos* (Estrella and Maldonado-Salcedo 2024).
24. In a perverse liberal logic, additionally, if we did not conform and contort to these prescribed ideas, our refusal would be evidence that we had deep-seated self-destructive patterns linked to internalized racism, sexism, and other social ills; thus, becoming an assimilable body was the only healthy and sane choice for becoming an even-keeled adult.
 25. A number of scholars have written about the school-to-prison pipeline, the foster care-to-prison pipeline, and the surveillance and criminalization of Black and Brown youth (Rios 2011; Shange 2019), the adultification of Black girls (Halliday 2019; Cox 2015; Zamora 2020), and excess surveillance through different channels, including public schools of BIPOC and white working-class mothers who are often assumed to be inherently unfit to carry out their roles (Tsing 1990; Roberts 2017).
 26. The Institute of Land, Work, and Citizenship. See de Souza Dantas and Mena (2017).
 27. Unlike men, in general, women in Brazil are abandoned by their partners and/or family members once they enter the criminal justice system—a phenomenon that is also observed in the context of the United States.
 28. Despite understanding that structural and everyday violence had severely curtailed the freedom and agency of my system-involved family and community members long before incarceration, I had not thought of them as survivors of police and state violence.
 29. I would be remiss, as well, if I did not share that while I struggled to identify with white middle-class Brazilians I interacted with at universities and in the middle-class neighborhoods I lived in, I felt at ease among the Black and Brown working-class individuals I encountered in the service industry and incarcerated. Women’s prisons in São Paulo are a quintessential example of state and racialized gender violence: The demographic is overwhelmingly poor, is uneducated (that is to say, they possess little formal schooling by western standards and historically have been deprived of their ancestral knowing), has experienced some level of psychological, sexual, and/or physical trauma by authorities or by family members, and is of African and/or Indigenous descent. Moreover, the inhumane conditions and further abuses that *re-educandas*—re-educating—women and gender nonconforming individuals and their families suffer at the hands of the state prison staff are also revealing of the many layers of oppression and violence that marginalized people endure. “Reeducating” refers to the process of being reeducated—resocialized into society.
 30. As Black transgender woman, abolitionist, and filmmaker Tourmaline (2020) says, “When we say abolish police. We also mean the cop in your head and in your heart.” See also Boal and Epstein (1990).
 31. See Amparo Alves 2021.
 32. Here, I invoke the Combahee River Collective Statement ([1977] 2021) to draw attention to Black transgender women’s particular oppression.
 33. Although, truth be told, such an outlandish idea would result in the liberation of all, if we take the Combahee River Collective Statement seriously. See also Saira Mehmood’s (2023) essay in which she attends to the value of anthropology in and

outside academia, the need for critical approaches to knowledge-making and circulation, and why anthropologists should “examine the inequalities and inequities that exist within our discipline.”

34. A case in point is the experience L. K. Roland (2011) discusses about her reception in Cuba as a dark-skinned African American woman and ethnographer. Cuba has a sizable population of mixed-race individuals and operates through a similar racial hierarchy found throughout Latin America. To obtain customer service in areas that attracted tourists and to not be misidentified as a sex worker, Roland had to perform her foreign identity as a U.S. American. This remains a critical and courageous ethnography to teach about the vulnerabilities that Black anthropologists endure and how what appears as overt racism in Latin America plagues the United States too.
35. Hat tip to Dr. Carole McGranahan.
36. For more on how the politics of exclusion in the academy directly affects Black women anthropologists, see Bolles (2013).
37. See Gumbs (2021).

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Meryleen Mena is an independent scholar and an AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow at the National Science Foundation. She holds a doctoral degree in sociocultural anthropology and a graduate certificate in women and gender studies. Her writing has appeared in *American Ethnological Society*, *The Scholar & Feminist Online*, and *Footnotes Blog* (coedited with Dr. Amarilys Estrella), as well as in the Brazil-based *Instituto Terra, Trabalho, e Cidadania* (with Dr. Heloisa de Souza Dantas). Dr. Mena's intersecting research interests range from income inequality, food and environmental justice, equitable solutions for the Black reproductive health crisis in the diaspora, reproductive rights, access to quality healthcare, and quality of life for Black, Afro-Latinx, Indigenous, and other marginalized people to rights of the detained. Dr. Mena's current book project builds from her doctoral research and draws from Black diasporic feminist thought in the Americas, critical prison studies, and medical anthropology to examine the experience of Afro-Brazilian women and gender-nonconforming individuals in the criminal justice system in São Paulo, Brazil.