

**Towards a solidarity-based network of agrarian studies global-south scholars:
*A Manifesto***



We are witnessing a new momentum in critical agrarian studies. In the last two decades, multiple crises around food, feed, fuel, natural resources extractivism, land, finance, labor, migration, environment and human rights have converged. All of these contribute to global resource grabbing in an era of capitalism and climate change which affect the most vulnerable in the Global South.

As a response to these crises, academics and scholar-activists of diverse backgrounds have been devoting their research efforts to analyzing and finding answers to the questions and challenges posed by and to development. Transnational, national and local agrarian/environmental justice movements have also been increasing mobilization and jointly collaborating around the global crises. The complexity of the events that are shaping and reshaping the development requires that we support these efforts to deepen our understanding of the ongoing issues and be part of a collective effort to transform rurality and neo-ruralities. We, as scholar activists from the Global South committed to social and environmental justice are assuming our role in this matter.

Conventionally, Global South scholars refer to researchers and/or activists from developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. However, we aim to conceptualize the Global South beyond a geographical and binary notion. It also encompasses the many differences existing within northern countries, where scholars from the working class, migrants and their children, women, indigenous peoples –among other marginalized groups– face similar obstacles. We also acknowledge that in the Global South, there are capitalist structures of knowledge production which enforce class divisions, social and environmental injustice. Usually, at the top of those structures are elites influenced by colonial ways of knowledge production. Therefore, we also problematize the idea that the world is just divided between South and North: multiple

intersections need to be recognized. The Global South is therefore understood, not merely as a place of provenance of researchers and scholar-activists, but situated within a broad framework of social struggles.

While many efforts have been made to rethink rural issues from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, our colonized societies –and subjectivities– have largely accepted mainstream interpretations and solutions as the best ones for too long. This should not be understood as a call to disregard academic debates among scholars in the North, but to note that the current challenges of the Global South necessitate room for new ideas and critical interpretations within our academic fields, that have been there but remained marginalized.

However, bringing these ideas into the centrestage is not an easy task for the vast majority of Global South scholars. Thus, we aim to develop an expanded solidarity network of authors, writers, readers, and reviewers to provide mutual support and create a non-sectarian network that promotes collaboration among critical scholarship engaged in rural movements fighting for social justice and equality.

Challenges

Of course, we face many challenges. First, the dominance of English as the mainstream academic language prevents brilliant scholars from the mainly non-English speaking Global South from contributing to key debates. The largest academic forums, journals, and publications where mainstream ideas and discourses are debated and reinforced, are usually dominated by renowned scholars affiliated with wealthy universities and research centers. This reduces the possibility of scholars from the Global South participating in these debates and disseminating our ideas, while we could otherwise contribute to creative ways of understanding and reshaping agrarian issues.

Second, there are not many critical agrarian studies-centered programs in universities and institutions. Coupled with that is the predominance of right-leaning and aid-dependent institutions who have to deal with overt and covert conditionalities.

Third, we count on unequally available and insufficient funds for agrarian studies work –e.g. scholarships, travel grants, conference funds etc. Closely linked, is our limited access to journals (mostly subscription-based, and written in English). As a result, we are more vulnerable to predatory journals, all of which tend to affect research outputs and recognition. In sum, the academic world tends to reproduce and reinforce global inequalities.

Two other aspects that Global South-based scholars face unequally is the level of personal risk associated with conducting sensitive research in certain countries. Additionally, job insecurity and

precariousness, racial and gender discrimination, and mainstream hegemony often compel us to choose research topics and career pathways outside of our preferences.

Potentials

A solidarity-based network of scholars from the Global South working in agrarian studies offers a broad range of possibilities. We are engaged with academic discussion in the Global South and know our countries and our contexts. We can create bridges between scholarships as much as we can join efforts to collectively decolonize academic practice. We know the political dynamics in our context, and that allows us to have access to sources and information, and navigate cultural and institutional practices. The multiple crises that are taking place in the world right now open spaces for new answers and interpretations to which we have so much to contribute. Therefore, we are willing to critically and strategically engage with research agenda including climate change, social justice and gender, among others. Currently, there are different opportunities for funding research in these areas but these require strategic measures. Despite the inherent problems of the point-based university system, this could be also an opportunity to engage critically with mainstream ideas through quality and timely publications- a feat that requires a considerable access to publications, language editing and conference funds. The sum of these opportunities also entails theoretical and practical efforts to decolonize our thinking, research and science.

Way Forward: Networking of scholar-activists within the critical agrarian studies tradition

As activists, we expect that our research have traction on ground- at different political and social spaces. To help minimize the dominance of the English language within scholarship, we aim to translate our work into multiple languages. Through our network, we also plan to translate academic work into multiple formats such as outlines, policy briefs for supporting other activists that have little opportunity for reading scientific and technical peer-reviewed papers, or other pieces produced in popular formats such as podcasts or blog entries.

Joint research is also very important to us. We plan to promote co-authorship between and among academics, activists and scholar activists to strengthen knowledge co-production and broaden the scope of dissemination. This naturally means that such people are to be actively considered and taken on board while writing the paper. Such engagement also facilitates the creation of a conduit for members in local groups to engage with the scholars of broader agrarian studies groups elsewhere and that might also be facing similar challenges not only in academia but also in the contexts they work locally.

As a community of scholar-activists, we are conscious about the necessity of being reflexive and sensitive to issues pertaining to our collaborative efforts and the building of cross-border solidarity. In an academic world dominated by profit-making and ruthless competition, we offer an alternative

based on solidarity and mutual care as a way of making and pursuing social justice. Thus, the networking is intended to host multiple collaborations and to address the everyday struggles faced by global south scholars. We look forward to gradually expanding it over time. Join us in this collective effort!

Addis Ababa, Accra, Antananarivo, Ayuuk, Bangalore, Beijing, Belo Horizonte, Berlin, Bogotá, Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Cairo, Cape Town, Changchun, Dhaka, The Hague, Hanoi, Harare, Istanbul, Johannesburg, Kampala, Kyoto, La Paz, Lima, London, Maputo, México D.F, New York, Phnom Penh, Río Cuarto, Pontianak, Río Cuarto, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Santiago, Semarang, Singapore, Taiyuan, Vancouver, Vientiane.

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