



New Media, Cultures of Sustainability, and Alternative Rationalities: A Culture-centered Approach

MOHAN J. DUTTA

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE



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Rebecca DeSouza
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Overview

- ❖ New media and global trends
- ❖ Sustainability and development
- ❖ Culture-Centered Approach (CCA)
- ❖ Alternative rationalities
- ❖ Future Directions



Neoliberalism and new media

- ❖ Interpenetrating global boundaries.
- ❖ Power of financial capital.
- ❖ State as enabler of capital.
- ❖ Environmental risks and disproportionate burdens borne by the poor; Global climate change.
- ❖ “Displacement by dispossession” (David Harvey); increasing global inequalities
- ❖ Migration and flow of labour/International Division of Labour/Structural Adjustment Programs
- ❖ Precarity of work and global dispossessions
- ❖ Increasing concentration of power/wealth in the hands of transnational elite.
- ❖ Transnational power inequalities are also geographical, deriving from the power of the Nation State.
- ❖ New media as instruments for reproducing inequalities.

New Media in Learning

- ❖ Technologies of seduction.
- ❖ Technologies of interaction.
- ❖ Technologies of participation.
- ❖ Technologies of co-optation.
- ❖ Technologies of control.
- ❖ Technologies of (im)mobility.
- ❖ Technologies and Empire.



Solutions of Sustainability

- ❖ Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs)
- ❖ Technology as enabler of progress
- ❖ Technology as solution to climate change
- ❖ Technology as a solution to global inequalities
- ❖ Ideology of the Fourth Industrial Revolution
- ❖ Smart City ideology



Communication Inequality

- ❖ Increasing marginalization of the poorer sectors of the globe
- ❖ Proliferation of new media
- ❖ Positioning of new media as democratizing tools
- ❖ Digital literacy and e-learning
- ❖ Depletion of democratic possibilities/spaces
- ❖ Rapid growth in participatory projects led by the WB, public-private partnerships, civil society organizations
- ❖ Increasing violence and the role of police and military



Communicative Inequalities

- ❖ Communication ownership
- ❖ Who holds the power in shaping communicative processes?
- ❖ Who owns communication infrastructures?
 - ❖ For what purposes?
 - ❖ With what agendas?



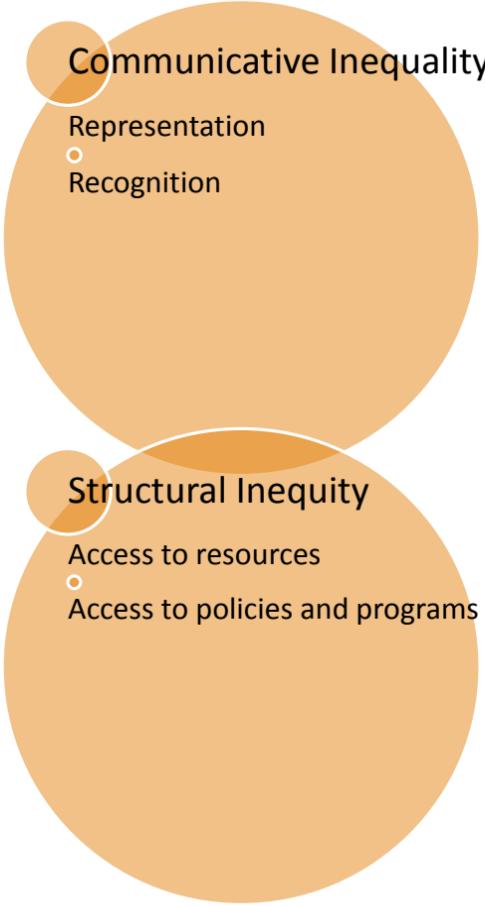
Communicative Inversions

“The deployment of communication to circulate interpretations that are reversals of material manifestations.” (Dutta, 2015)

- ❖ The role of communicative inversions in reproducing and perpetuating the status quo.



Communicative and Material Inequalities



Communicative Inequality

Representation

- Recognition

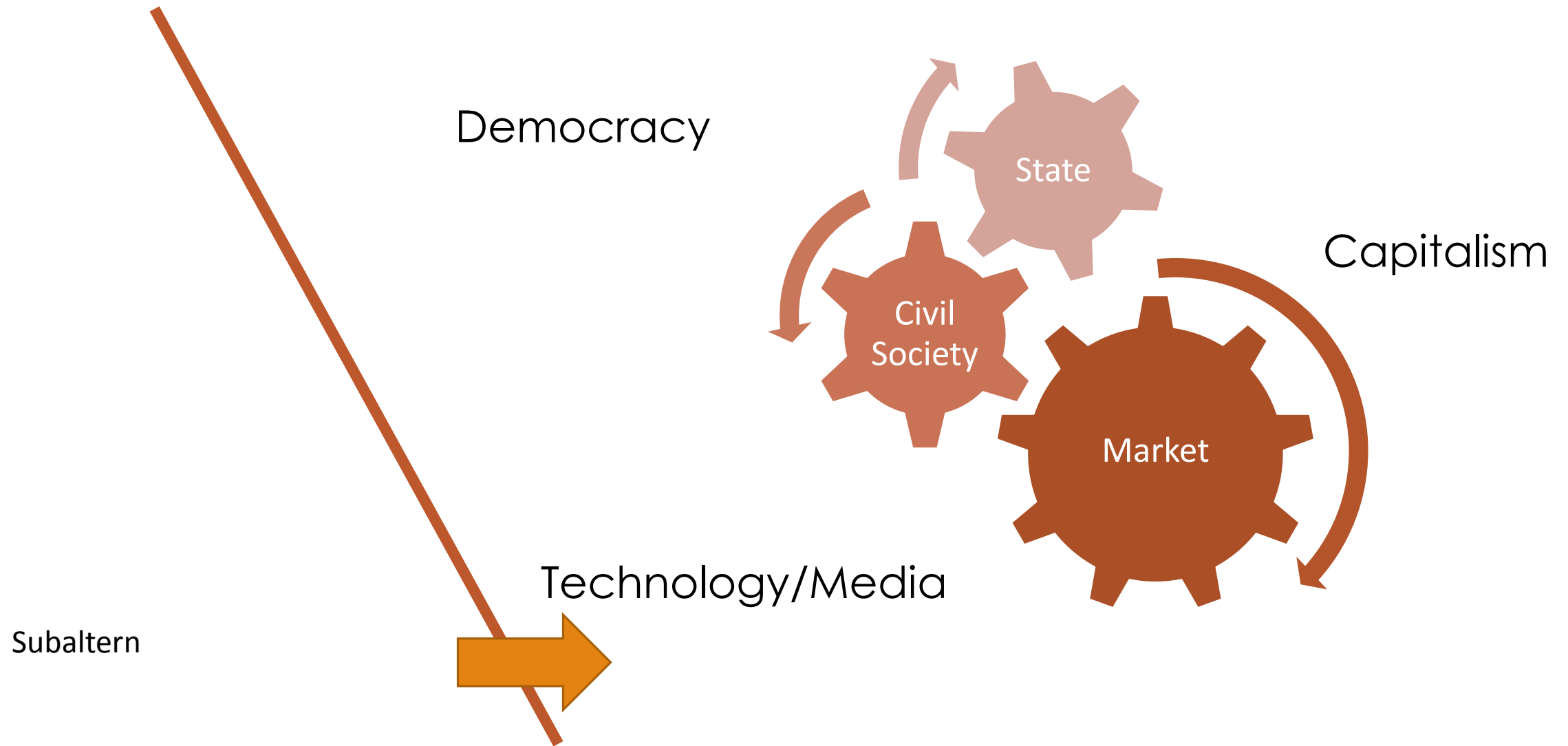
Structural Inequity

Access to resources

- Access to policies and programs

Communication as Erasure

The Davos Consensus



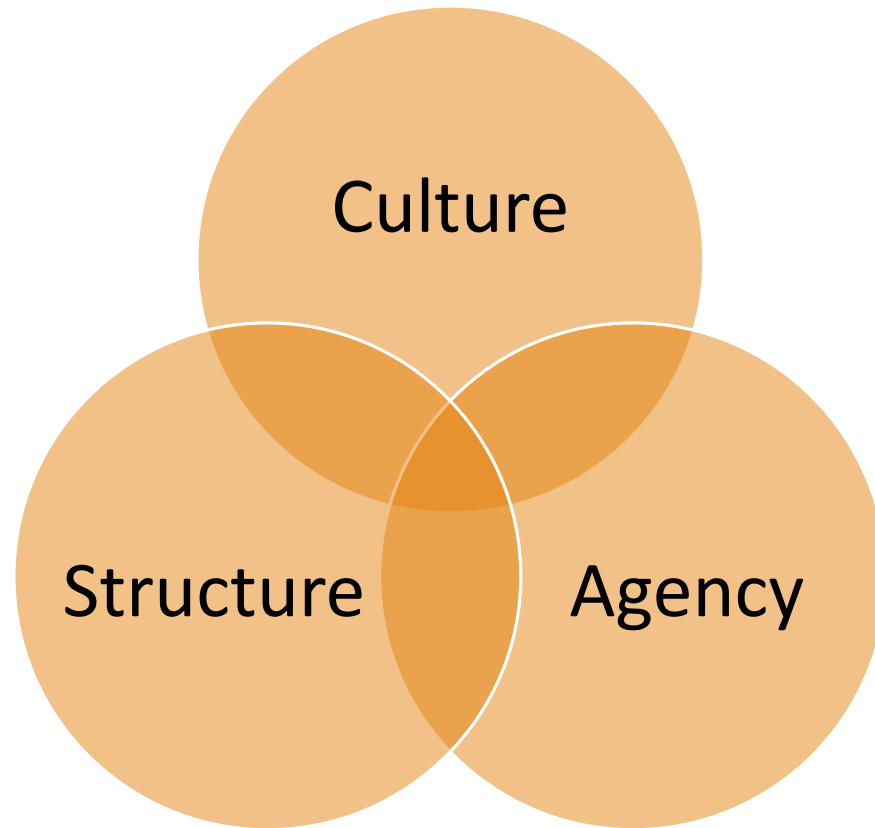
Culture-Centered Approach

- ❖ “Learning to Learn from Below” (Spivak, 2004)
- ❖ Patient listening to an ethic of the other
- ❖ Working toward an other imagination

Inverting the dominant structures of meaning making.

CULTURE-CENTERED APPROACH

Theoretical Framework



Infrastructures of Listening

Listening as an entry point to disrupting silences perpetuated by the dominant structures of knowledge production/techno-determinism

Listening as an entry point to imagining alternative social-political-economic structures

Listening as a framework for making impure dominant categories



Infrastructures of Listening

“The powerful want to tell things the way they see them. In their own way. In ways that feed their interests. So what is your role. Listen to us. Work with us. Collaborate on things that we can do on the ground that represent our interests. It has been so many times that our interests are not really heard. The community feels isolated, and no place to go to. So we work together in making the avenues where our voices can be heard such that they matter.”

- Rosie Thomas, Lead Community Organizer, Communities and Universities Addressing Health Disparities, Lake County, IN, late Executive Director, Lake County Minority Health Coalition

“When we hold these cameras, we tell our stories. When we run the radio station in the community, we tell the stories grounded in our lives. So is not the money that the big people pay to sell their version, which is always about making profit by making fools of us. So on the radio, these are stories of what farmers are really going through here in Warrangal, and in Pastapur.”

- Nadamma, Lead Community Organizer and Advisory Board Member, Deccan Development Society

Strategies for sustenance

Creating Communicative Spaces



WE WON'T LEAVE



HIYANGIRI

EVEN IF YOU
BEHEAD US

Image by David Laundy

Dongria Kondh Leader Lado Sikaka

niyamgiri



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Uploaded by [niyamgiri](#) on Aug 10, 2010

Lado Sikaka, leader of the Dongria Kondh's anti-mining struggle was either illegally arrested on 9 August 2010 (World Indigenous People's Day) or was abducted by hired goons of Vedanta and has been taken to an undisclosed location. Along with him is another leader of the Dongria Kondh, Sana Meiki.

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Key discovery events

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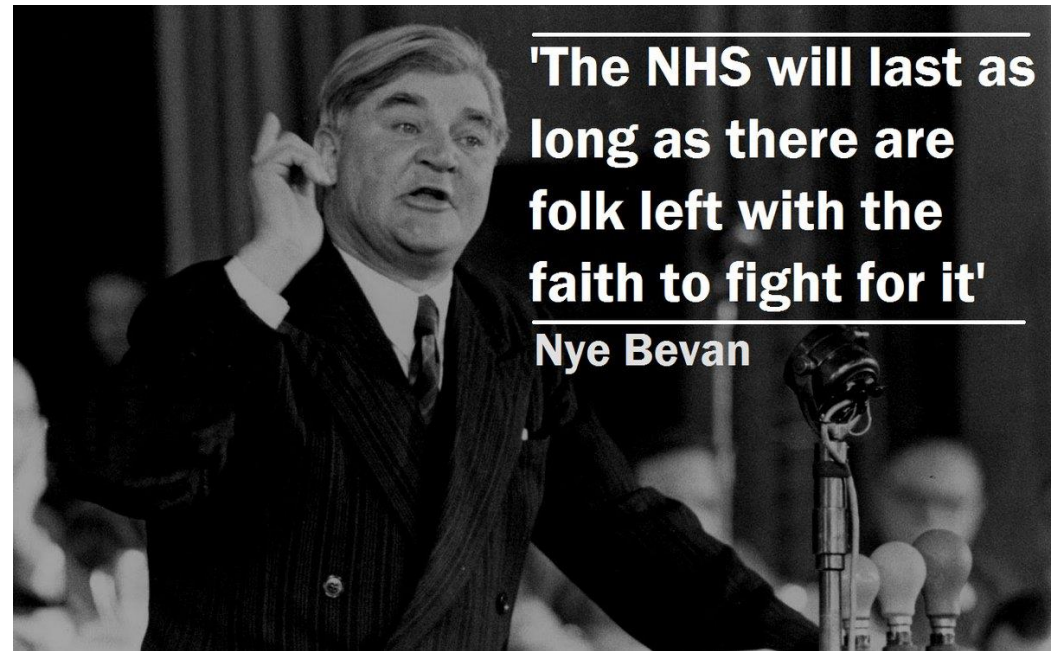
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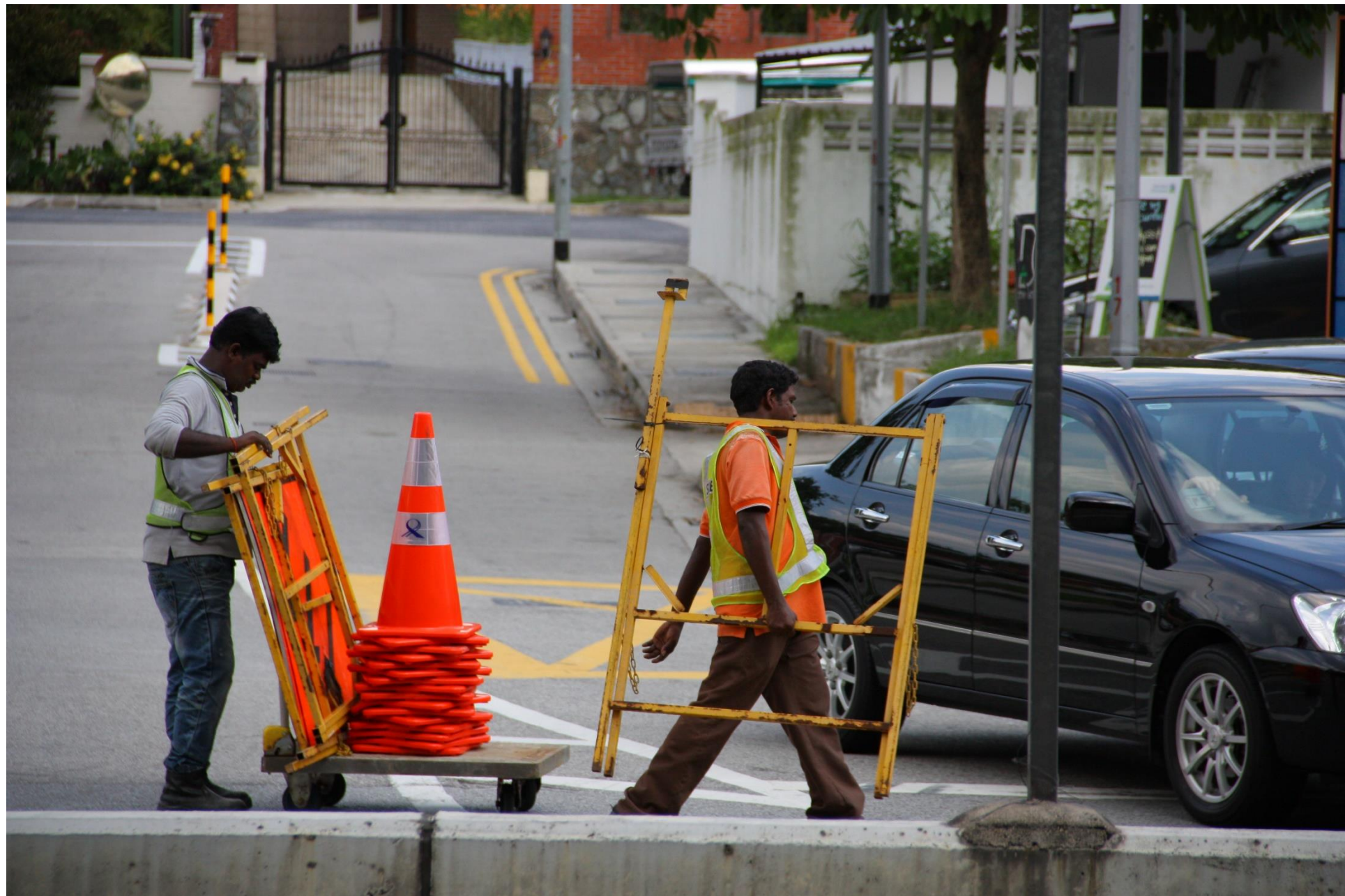
Imagining Other Possibilities: Intervening in the Global from the South



Challenging neoliberal pseudoscience

- ❖ Healthcare is a fundamental human right.
- ❖ Public welfare is a human right.
- ❖ Food security is a human right.
- ❖ Access to livable wages is a human right.
- ❖ Housing is a human right.





Bodies in hunger

“It is about 2 years ago when I was working in another company ...they also used to supply caterers food which we were never able to eat fully ... so we were always hungry. It was in one of those days that ... that we were in remote work site where there were no food courts around. One of our brothers sat eating and he opened the packet for having food. He thought that there is prawn inside the packet as he saw two tentacles coming out of the packet. But it was not a prawn but a cockroach... after some times when we saw him eating it we asked ...what are you eating brother...? He said prawn... we told we did not get prawn in the lunch box...where did you get in from...take it out from your mouth and let me see it.... It was a COCKROACH!!! (Everybody laughs uncontrollably) like this you can find various kinds and types of insects in this food...”

“How can I work without food? I wake up at 4:30 in the morning just so that I can stand in the line for the bathroom, then get ready and pick up the packet of food, both breakfast and lunch...the breakfast will still be OK, some roti, the vegetable will not be so clean. The lunch is really bad. Everything has gone stale by the time I open the lunch packet. It starts smelling. Many days I just throw the food away. Some days, I made myself eat the food and then got sick, had to go the doctor and could not go to work. My whole body has broken down because of this. How then can I even get up and go to work?”

“Why do we work so hard, you tell me? If the food is not even going to be OK, then why? How can I work without any food? Can you come here and do your work without food? Some days, I haven't eaten anything the whole day and feel I am going to faint on the job. Can't carry the heavy load because there's no food in my body. You know, us Bengalis, we love our food. Isn't just the basic minimum our right?”



Health as Food Justice

“Our health is our right. That is what we have, and what we own. And it is about our food, what we eat. Health is all about food. When I think about that, it is my right to grow my food, and my right to my seed. Food is essential to health. So we have to protect the right of farmers like us to protect and grow what we have as our own crops, the millet, the jowar, the bajra. These are all our crops.”

Who owns knowledge?

“What we eat is what we grow. This is what our mothers have done for generations. No cotton. No Bt. We grow our own crops, food crops, crops that connect to soil. We don’t depend on anyone for these crops. We protect the seeds, and share them with each other. The seed bank is for the whole community, and for other communities. How can just take some seeds and say you own them. And tell me, why does the agricultural research station do just all that, to kill our agriculture here. They want everyone to grow Cotton. Who will then grow the food?”

“I know what I want, what food I want for my family. I am not going to let my husband, or the seed agent, or the government worker to tell me what to grow, making false promises to me about lots and lots of money. Money will come and go, but these food crops, these are our own and they will pass on. We have to pass them on.”

“Beeja Satyagraha” (Seed sovereignty)

“It is important because earlier all the seeds used to be with Kaapulu (one of the land owning caste in Andhra Pradesh) and obviously an agriculture labourer like me who did not have any seeds and had to rely on the owner completely. But now, with the introduction of seed banks, during rainy season, we store seeds and sow it as per our convenience.”

“We solved the problem of scarcity of seeds for everyone, the food scarcity also has been solved and we now work in our own fields. We know the importance of working in our own fields.”



Solidarity as affects of care

“Here, the *Sangham* works in 75 villages. So in many villages we have people who do not have any land. So we get them together and get some loan to rent some fallow land. They rent it for 4, 3, 2 years, and then they pay back the loan amount every year, for example about 400-500 rupees per acre, sometimes 1000 rupees per acre, according to the worth of the land. So I help them get money from the office. Then after they plant and get yields, and then keeping some for their own needs, they sell some part of the yield and pay the money back to the office. “

“Beeja Yatra” (Seed Walks)



“In the Beeja yatra, we walk with the seeds across the villages, stop from place to place, remember the knowledge our mothers shared with us, passed down over many generations.”

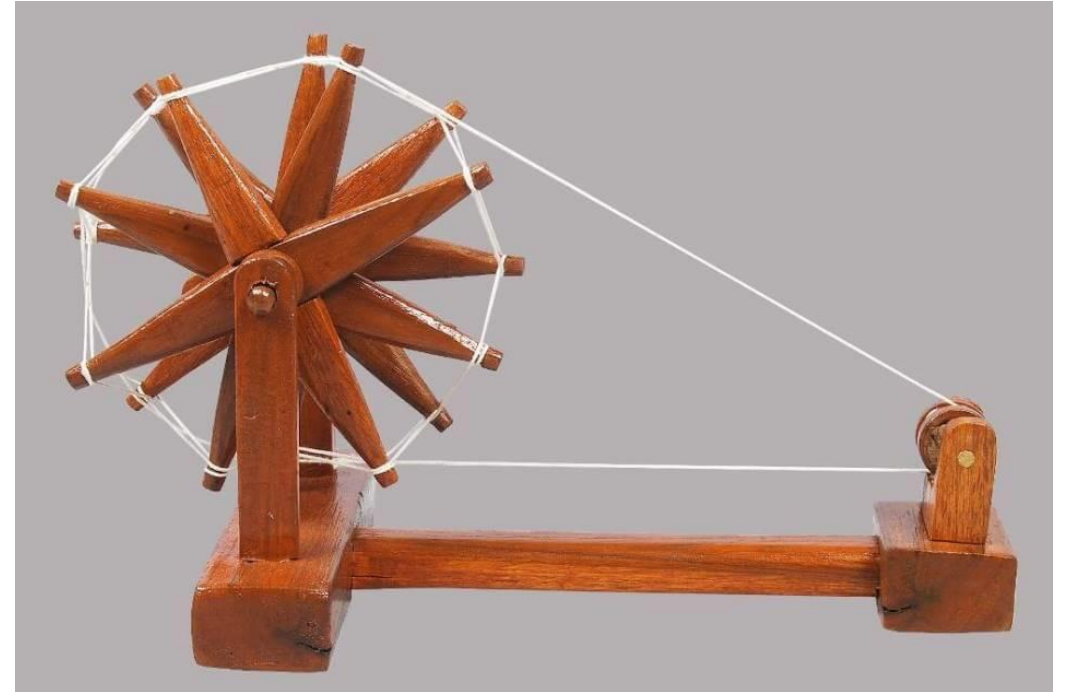
Disrupting Erasures in Global Structures

“...we did some projects, doing participatory research assessments, went to different countries and met different people like scientists, and they all attended (the Conference of Parties (COP)15 summit). And it ran for a week. But they haven't done any policy level changes...We participated in a lot of rallies demanding that we should be allowed to lead in making climate change laws. They gave us identity tags, but we burnt it demanding that we don't need laws that are made without consulting us.”



Inverting hegemonic meanings

- ❖ Re-inscribing enlightenment rationality with meanings grounded in social justice
- ❖ “Rendering impure” the dominant articulations of enlightenment rationality
- ❖ Creating new meanings from everyday cultural lives in the South
- ❖ “Ab-using” enlightenment rationality for a radical politics of transformation



Respect our Rights

“These are our rights as domestic workers. When we work in your home, it is also work. And we want to be treated with respect, with the rights that come with work. Tell me, how do you expect to be treated at work. We want to be treated the same way. Treat us like human. Not some body that will do your housework morning to night, taking your abuse and name-calling. Respect our rights.”



Inverting Rights

“I am here to work and make a living. So treat me as a worker. That’s all I ask, not as some slave in your house. Like you, this is work for me. You dress up and go to work mam, don’t you? Then what’s wrong if I dress up for my work. Why do you ask me to wear lose clothes? Why can’t I have my phone? Why is my passport with you? Does your employer keep your passport? Does your employer take away your phone? Treat me with the dignity of a worker.”

“My agency gave me a contract in the Philippines that said I will get S\$600, when I come here they say S\$300. That’s what I get they say. But I signed a different contract in Indonesia. Then many month my employer skip the salary, say will pay later, later. No good. You give me a contract and get me to sign. I do my work. You give my pay.”

A FREE DOCUMENTARY SCREENING FOR
FILMS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE



Come join us as we screen our first documentary produced by the Center for Culture-Centred Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE) featuring the voices of domestic workers in Singapore. Collaborating with 27 foreign domestic workers, these stories of loss, betrayal, longing and belonging aim to raise awareness on the common issues faced by these workers during their terms of employment here in Singapore.

NGEE ANN KONGSI AUDITORIUM
5TH FEBRUARY 2015
6PM - 8PM

6:00PM // MEET AND GREET WITH DINNER
7:00PM // DOCUMENTARY SCREENING
7:30PM // PANEL DISCUSSION AND Q&A

PANEL MEMBERS

JOLIVAN WHAM // EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF H.O.M.E.

CELINE DERMINE // LEGAL CONSULTANT FOR H.O.M.E.

PROF. MOHAN J. DUTTA // HEAD OF CNM, DIRECTOR OF CARE

JUVY LAVARIAS // EX-DOMESTIC WORKER, ADVISORY BOARD PARTICIPANT



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"I must live forever with this shame"

Posted on [February 10, 2015](#)





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Resisting dominant channels

- ❖ Disrupting the flows of symbols in the channels of the status quo.
- ❖ Creating other channels that bypass the neoliberal logics of mainstream channels of communication.
 - ❖ iSlave and Appconn (Qiu, 2016)
- ❖ Re-articulating dominant channels of communication in a politics of resistance.
- ❖ Reimagining the politics of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube



#waterprotectors

#standingrock





Creating channels outside neoliberal capital

- ❖ Alternative technologies as sites of communication
- ❖ Alternative communication resources that resist the logics of neoliberal capital
 - ❖ Social media on the picket line
- ❖ Working class Information and communication technologies
- ❖ Working class organizing in the technology sectors





Communication and Imagination

- ❖ To imagine other possibilities is to build communicative justice
- ❖ Communities as sites of meaning-making
- ❖ Communities as sites of articulation
- ❖ The struggles for global justice are struggles for the right to communicate.





“There is something else outside this that is possible.”
- Kali, 32-year-old Santali community activist