# Southern Transitions.
# Facing climate change and ecological degradation in the Global South

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*The ecological transition represents one of the most complex and urgent challenges of our time. Climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and environmental degradation are severe consequences of a socioeconomic system in need of a radical rethinking. Although this is a matter of global significance, profound imbalances exist between the Global North and the Global South in terms of both impacts and responsibilities. This issue of Contesti, curated by LabPSM – Laboratory on City and Territory in the Global South at the University*

## 1. A call to critically engage with climate crisis, colonial legacies, and justice

The thematic issue "SOUTHERN TRANSITIONS. Facing climate change and ecological degradation in the Global South" responds to a pressing academic need to reconceptualize sustainable development from a justice-oriented, postcolonial perspective. It highlights the profound asymmetries of responsibility and impact in the ecological crisis, noting that the Global South, despite contributing least to global emissions, remains disproportionately exposed to climate risks and constrained by limited resources for adaptation.

These disparities not only limit the capacity of institutions and citizens to advance effective policies and interventions but are also reproduced within mainstream scientific research, which continues to focus disproportionately on Western contexts and remains biased toward theories generated in the Global North. Acknowledging both the challenges confronted by, and the crucial role of, cities and territories in the Global South is

*of Florence, aims to contribute to the debate on approaches, methods, and best practices for addressing the complex challenges of transition in Global South contexts. The collected articles reflect this complexity, engaging with diverse places and themes, yet sharing a common postcolonial and situated perspective in their analysis of urban phenomena.*

therefore essential – not only for collectively advancing the difficult process of ecological transition but also for ensuring that such efforts are grounded in justice. Crucially, this requires a critical interrogation of how contemporary inequalities are not simply the lingering legacy of centuries of colonial domination but also the product of new forms of colonialism.

LabPSM – Laboratory on Cities and Territories in the Global South – of the University of Florence proposed this thematic issue with the aim of broadening the academic debate on transition processes in the Global South. The call for paper critical stance and thematic priorities directly reflect LabPSM's long-standing research trajectory and pedagogical commitment, as well as the intellectual framework developed through years of research, action, and cooperation in deeply fragile territories (Paba et al. 1998; Paloscia & Anceschi 1996; Paloscia & Tarsi, 2012; Paloscia et al., 2017; Tarsi, 2019).

The LabPSM's work is historically positioned within the broader framework of the territorialist school (Magnaghi & Paloscia, 1992; Magnaghi, 2000). The LabPSM's research has consistently sought to translate the strategic vision of "territorial heritage" to contexts which have suffered profound exploitation of both resources and population. This required a necessary adaptation of the planner's gaze, advocating for an epistemology of the South (Santos & Meneses, 2009) to interpret urban phenomena and challenge generalist theories derived from the North.

Building on this foundation, this thematic issue adopts a postcolonial approach (Chakrabarty, 2008) to investigate the differentiated responsibilities and uneven impacts of the ecological crisis across territories marked by enduring forms of exploitation. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to a trajectory of planetary justice by critically interrogating North-South relations and the distortive effects of green-oriented policies that continue to displace environmental burdens disproportionately to the Global South. Crucially, this thematic issue advocates participatory and place-based processes that value endogenous epistemologies, knowledge, and practices. This orientation is rooted in the LabPSM's methodological emphasis on engaging local communities in recognising and mobilising contextual heritage. Central to this approach is the development of participatory pathways that empower vulnerable populations, who are often excluded from technical planning expertise, thereby enabling their

meaningful participation in conscious and shared transformation. Such investment in capacity building and active citizenship is vital for qualifying the human capital necessary to identify territorial values and potential.

Finally, the issue's emphasis on the heightened fragility of urban and metropolitan areas in the Global South – exacerbated by rapid urbanization, segregation, and informality – directly reflects the LabPSM's core research agenda (Tarsi, 2014; 2017; Gisotti & Tarsi, 2022; Testi, 2023). This involves critically examining interventions and policies aimed at the sustainable transformation and requalification of informal settlements, recognising informality not as an aberration but as a mode of spatial production (Roy, 2005; 2011), and framing such processes as essential pathways toward urban inclusion grounded in principles of social and spatial justice.

## 2. North-South relations through the lens of planetary justice

Theorisations of urbanism and planetary justice have long been dominated by the epistemic and institutional frameworks of the Global North. This dominance has had profound consequences for how urban processes in the Global South are represented, governed, and theorised. At stake is not simply the circulation of ideas, but the reproduction of unequal structures of knowledge and power that reflect the enduring legacies of colonialism and the asymmetries of neoliberal globalisation. To view North–South relations through the lens of planetary justice thus requires attention to epistemological injustice, to conflicts of rationality within planning regimes, and to the ways in which climate change and environmental governance reproduce new forms of dependency and dispossession.

As Roy notes (2009; 2016), urban theory remains firmly rooted in Euro-American experience, universalising metropolitan contexts that are situated in the North and relegating Southern geographies to the margins of theory, where they are depicted primarily as problems of underdevelopment, or "slums" that await reform. With the North as a silent referent (Chakrabarty, 2008) the produced asymmetrical ignorance (Robinson, 2003) is precisely the dynamic that Roy identifies in urban studies: models generated from a handful of Northern cities become a universal grammar, while Southern ones are relegated to the status of empirical difference or pathology.

The coloniality of knowledge that endures within in planning systems generates what Watson terms a "conflict of rationalities" between technocratic, market-oriented modes of governance and the lived realities of marginalised populations (Watson, 2009). Institutions and regulatory frameworks, often inherited from colonial times, reproduce Northern logics of order and commodification in the governance of Southern cities and while these systems are increasingly tasked with reconciling urban competitiveness and climate adaptation with poverty reduction, in practice they frequently exacerbate exclusion

by privileging elite interests and marginalising informal livelihoods.

Recognising the centrality of urban informality understood, with Roy, as a mode of space production (2011) has been crucial in unsettling this epistemic dominance. From this recognition emerges the call to provincialise Europe (Chakrabarty, 2008) and to chart new trajectories for the decolonisation of mainstream urban thought (Robinson, 2011; Sheppard et al., 2013). In this vein, scholars have advanced the case for a distinct Southern urban theory (Chakrabarti, 2023; Connell, 2014), one that foregrounds the epistemic and methodological specificities of cities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and repositions informality as a mode of spatial production.

## 3. Placing the socioecological transition in the Global South

The specificity of the Global South in relation to climate change and environmental degradation lies in a complex interplay of historical disparities, disproportionate vulnerabilities, and contemporary forms of neocolonial dependency, alongside a growing protagonism in the struggle for climate justice. Countries in the South bear the paradox of contributing the least to global greenhouse gas emissions while being the most exposed to their consequences: they face recurrent climate-induced disasters that exacerbate poverty and inequality, disproportionately affecting already marginalised groups such as women, indigenous peoples, and resource-dependent communities (Auz Vaca, 2024; Parsons et al., 2024; Pires De Araújo et al., 2023; Rao, 2022).

If metropolitan areas worldwide constitute the primary arenas where the structural contradictions between the dominant socioeconomic model and the ecological crisis are most clearly displayed – functioning both as centres of unsustainable consumption and major sources of climate-altering emissions, while presenting intensified vulnerability to environmental degradation and climate change – such vulnerability is further intensified in the Global South, where urban fragilities are exacerbated by persistent forms of poverty, segregation, and inequality (Rath, 2022). Rapid urbanization and suburbanization frequently unfold in contexts characterized by informality and precariousness in the built environment, thereby exacerbating the challenges of adaptation (Hussainzad & Gou, 2024). Therefore, advancing in the ecological transition process and adapting to climate change, without reinforcing existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, requires a holistic understanding of local contexts and the active participation of all relevant actors. This perspective resonates with critical political ecology, which conceptualizes environmental disasters and risks as products of entrenched social inequalities and the territorialization of social hierarchies (Tierney, 2011). The inherent social and environmental contradictions of urbanisation in the Global South reveal that climate risk is not only spatially uneven

but also profoundly intersectional and translocal. As Sultana (2022) argues, the coloniality of climate weighs heavily on marginalised populations, restraining adaptation opportunities through racial capitalism, dispossession, and enduring climate debts. Environmental risks are thus never isolated phenomena but the cumulative expression of long-standing structural inequalities, produced and reproduced through global governance regimes and techno-managerial planning frameworks.

## 4. The pitfalls of global environmental policies

As Western countries retain control over most knowledge production and resource extraction, the scientific and political rhetoric underpinning environmental policies risk advancing Northern interests over global ones. This dynamic, if left unaddressed, entrenches a form of climate neo-colonialism that positions the Global South as responsible for mitigation activities designed to address a crisis for which it bears minimal responsibility (Allam et al., 2022). Simultaneously, the promotion of so-called "green solutions" heightens demand for raw materials and specialised expertise, resources that are unevenly distributed worldwide, thereby exacerbating existing North–South inequalities (Horn, 2023). Furthermore, the repeated subsumption of adaptation and mitigation policies by neoliberalism underscores how the central role of capitalism in driving the climate crisis is not only persistent but systematically obscured, even

though, as Pires De Araújo et al. (2023) argue, it remains the backbone of the crisis itself.

In this context, mechanisms such carbon trading, the Clean Development Mechanism, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), and Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) operate as *socio-environmental fixes* (Horn, 2023), displacing the contradictions of capitalism to peripheral regions and deferring engagement with their structural causes. The pursuit of carbon neutrality through global carbon markets has generated profound distortions in the Global South, undermining food security and territorial rights. Conceived as instruments of sustainable development, schemes like the CDM have facilitated land consolidation by corporate actors, shifting the burden of emission reductions onto Southern contexts (Mathur et al., 2014). In Latin America, carbon-financed projects have favoured industrial monocultures – such as tree plantations, sugarcane, and export-oriented livestock – accelerating agrarian transitions and displacing small-scale farming systems (Overbeek et al., 2012). Rather than fostering resilience, these initiatives have deepened dependency and eroded local sovereignty over land and food production. As Horn (2023) observes, such mechanisms created a *green precariat* in which marginalised groups bear the costs of socio-ecological reproduction under precarious conditions. Together, these dynamics reveal how progressive climate policies can mask processes of dispossession,

perpetuating historical patterns of exploitation under the guise of environmental responsibility. These same dynamics underpin what Fairhead et al. (2012) call *green grabbing:* the appropriation of land and resources under the guise of environmental protection. Policies presented as tools for biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, or the expansion of biofuels often replicate long-standing colonial and neo-colonial trajectories of alienation. Large-scale oil palm plantations, for example, are promoted not only for commercial biofuels but also as purportedly "zero-emission" energy sources, while industrial tree plantations in the Global South are actively encouraged as carbon sinks or biomass supplies for European energy markets, deepening negative impacts on local communities (EJOLT, 2012).

The uneven geographies of climate change have also found expression in emerging forms of climate litigation. While many landmark cases originate in Northern jurisdictions, Southern states and communities are increasingly turning to courts to seek accountability for a crisis they did little to create. As Vaca explains, climate litigation in the South is marked by the paradox of suffering disproportionately from climate change impacts "without being major GHG emitters" (Auz Vaca, 2024). At the urban scale, climate injustice manifests through new forms of exclusion. Pires De Araujo et al. show how neoliberal climate policies in Santiago exacerbate inequalities by commodifying air and creating exclusive "climate enclaves" for elites

(Pires De Araújo et al., 2023). Mathur et al. similarly demonstrate that carbon market projects often provide little benefit to host communities and aggravate procedural injustices by limiting their agency (Mathur et al., 2014).

## 5. The imperative for place-based and participatory approaches

The legacy of modernist urbanism, with its rigid dualism between nature and society (Kaika, 2004), risks perpetuating imperialist ideologies when transposed uncritically onto Global South geographies. As several scholars note, planning frameworks derived from Western epistemologies tend to privilege technocratic, top-down interventions that obscure local contexts and reproduce asymmetric power relations (Harvey, 2009). Even ambitious ecological transition projects, when embedded in technocratic, productivist and growth-oriented paradigms, can generate distortive effects and negative externalities, including the creation of so-called green sacrifice zones (Zografos & Robbins, 2020) that place the costs of sustainability on marginalised communities.

To avoid these pitfalls, the process of ecological transition should be centred in place-based, participatory processes that surface and respect local socio-environmental specificities. Therefore, rather than privileging abstract, universalising expertise, participatory processes must generate plural and situated knowledges capable of directly contesting the prevailing techno-

cratic and economic paradigm and its embedded power asymmetries (Watson, 2009; Roy, 2011). Local communities – particularly those inhabiting precarious or informal settlements – hold forms of subaltern and situated knowledge that are not reducible to expert technical rationalities but instead constitute fundamental understandings of their territories.

Integrating situated and subaltern knowledges requires that project interventions embed principles of social justice from the outset, moving beyond tokenistic consultation toward genuine co-production. This implies actively mitigating power imbalances, avoiding the suppression of dissent, and engaging with vulnerable groups (Few et al., 2007). Citizen engagement then becomes not merely a procedural exercise, but an attempt to enable democratic distribution of ecological resources while resisting extractive dynamics such as green gentrification (Angelowsky et al., 2019). In this sense, ecological transitions in the Global South must be grounded in co-production processes that draw upon the lived experiences of marginalised groups, while being explicitly oriented towards the multiple dimensions of justice—distributional, procedural, recognitional, and restorative (Schlosberg, 2013; Angelowsky et al., 2016).

This is not only essential to give voice to inhabitants but also to call into question a hierarchy, grounded in colonial history, that has typically put technical knowledge above others (Santos, 2007). Such a hierarchy tends to disregard the other forms of situated knowledge that can contribute to informing action and decision-making. Context-specific, place-based, and traditional forms of knowledge can be viewed as living heritages that complements scientific expertise and survived despite centuries of exclusion and oppression, which have indelibly marked colonized countries (Tran & Kim, 2024). In Global South countries, where exposure to climate risk is higher, public resources are more limited, and place-based knowledge is directly relevant to justice-related issues, co-producing such knowledge is especially important.

### 6. Co-producing knowledge in the Global South

Co-production has emerged as a fundamental tool at the science-policy interface, and its significance has progressively expanded to encompass diverse collaborative strategies (Mitlin, 2008). In the planning literature, the term co-production is typically linked to collective forms of governance and stresses the contribution of multiple actors (e.g. institutions, citizens, NGOs, professionals) to generating knowledge, delivering services, or influencing policies (Lee et al., 2024). Such initiatives are inherently iterative processes and are underpinned by methods derived from participatory and ethnographic research (i.e., community workshops, focus groups, participatory mapping, questionnaires) (Cannon et al., 2024). When successfully implemented, these initiatives enable civil society actors to come together, share their knowledge and capabilities, and contribute

to building community capacity and shaping local development pathways.

These outcomes cannot be achieved without creating governance configurations capable of fostering truly inclusive and democratic arenas. Enabling such knowledge exchanges necessitates the establishment of long, complex, and often political processes – which can be even more difficult to carry out in Global South contexts where public resources are scarce (Few et al., 2007; Mikulewicz, 2017). In fact, the presence of high socioeconomic inequalities, combined with the lack of trust towards institutions, can crucially undermine the ability of citizens (and especially the urban poor) to participate (Chu et al., 2016). These imbalances become even more problematic when co-production is framed as a response to state retrenchment, in which case it risks generating additional burdens for ordinary citizens. In summary, co-production is not a panacea to address structural inequalities, socio-political conflicts, and knowledge hierarchies (Castán Broto et al., 2022). However, if implemented reflexively, it represents a key precondition to situate planning and decision-making in local social and environmental contexts.

In some cases, co-production is primarily aimed at generating knowledge and assessments. Frameworks for co-production have proved versatile across diverse domains, such as urban health (Audia et al., 2021), biodiversity and quality of life assessments (Vallet et al., 2023), vulnerability analyses (Twinomuhangi et al., 2021), and

water resilience (Sridharan et al., 2023). Beyond knowledge generation, co-production initiatives have also influenced planning and decision-making, and recent analyses suggest that more inclusive engagement tends to enhance equity and justice outcomes (Chu et al., 2016), and generate new institutional logics that make adaptation policies more actionable (Vogel et al., 2021). Similar strategies are increasingly integrated into so-called community-based adaptation, which emphasises the involvement of local communities in the process of public planning, decision-making, and implementation (Ruiz-Mallén, 2020).

These examples underline how co-production can broaden the epistemic base of adaptation research, and why it matters in the context of *Southern Transitions*. By opening space for multiple epistemologies, it challenges the technocratic and extractive approach that has long dominated planning and adaptation. At the same time, designing co-production strategies and integrating them into planning policy and practice remain a demanding and highly context-dependent process which cannot be reduced to a technical or procedural fix: it is an inherently political process that needs to acknowledge the uneven geographies of knowledge production (Wiegleb & Bruns, 2025). In spite of these difficulties, co-production emerges as a promising approach to mitigating a North/South divide and achieving more equitable futures – especially in places where historical inequalities and contemporary vul-

nerabilities converge.

To conclude, we believe that the demand for climate justice requires recognizing the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, not only among countries but also within urban spaces. Justice-oriented approaches must therefore acknowledge the entanglement between North and South, and the structural inequities that have shaped these relations. Therefore, to bring North–South relations into the domain of planetary justice is to situate urbanism within the broader political ecology of climate change, coloniality, and global capitalism. Justice here is not only distributive but epistemic and procedural. It entails recognising Southern urban experiences as sources of theory, valuing local knowledges and practices in planning, and ensuring equitable participation in climate governance. It also requires resisting the commodification of nature and the reduction of planetary crisis to market opportunities.

## 7. Critical overview of the articles

This thematic issue of *Contesti* brings together contributions from scholars based in Italy as well as in the Global South. The articles reflect on approaches and methods, while also presenting case studies and best practices aimed at addressing the major challenge of the socio-ecological transition. The collection of articles, examining diverse contexts from megacities like Jakarta and Ahmedabad to peripheral communities in Brazil and Chile, demonstrates a concerted scholarly effort to address this mandate by critiquing prevailing modernization paradigms, championing epistemic justice, and redefining equitable urban transitions.

*I. The cumbersome legacy of western modernity and technocratic planning*

A thematic thread woven through the contributions is the enduring "coloniality of power" inherent in planning practices, often manifesting as rigid, universalist, and technocratic models developed in the Global North. The articles dissect how these inherited paradigms exacerbate socio-spatial inequalities in Global South urban environments.

The case of Auroville, India, presented by **Fontana**, provides a stark illustration of the conflict between an abstract spatial utopia and the complex, situated reality of an experimental community. The city's original modernist plan, conceived in 1968, reflects a Western-centric epistemology rooted in nature/society dualism and spatial determinism. This modernist legacy, viewed as a "cumbersome legacy", dictates a geometric and functionalist logic imposed upon a territory characterized by complex ecological regeneration efforts and evolving social dynamics. Critically, the recent coercive implementation of this rigid plan by the Indian Central Government—involving forest clearing, demolition of self-managed spaces, and unilateral governance changes—demonstrates how contemporary city building can still rely on imperialist ide-

ologies. This action foregrounds the argument that a theory of the urban must advance alongside a necessary critique of the State.

Similarly, in Jakarta, Indonesia, the socio-spatial segregation that places low-income communities (kampungs) in high hydrogeological risk areas traces its origins back to the Dutch colonial period. Post-colonial governance has perpetuated this pattern, utilizing top-down, technocratic flood management projects (like the Ciliwung River Normalization) that treat vulnerable populations as the source of risk, often leading to forced evictions without sustainable alternatives. This practice, as **Bachechi** argues, is a material manifestation of asymmetric power relations and the territorialization of social hierarchies, where risk is actively produced by governance failure, reflecting deep structural inequalities. This directly confirms the Call of paper's necessity to investigate the differentiated effects of transitions on marginalized communities.

In the realm of urban mobility, the challenge is amplified by the uncritical transfer of planning concepts. **Alberti et al.**'s study on Quito/Nayón, Ecuador, demonstrates how concepts like the Compact City and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), though ostensibly promoting sustainability, fail to reconcile universal frameworks with local needs, resulting in urban segregation and favoring high-rise luxury developments

*II. Epistemic justice and the valorization of endogenous knowledge*

The Call for Papers placed central importance on promoting place-based, participatory approaches that value endogenous epistemologies, knowledge, and practices, explicitly advocating for non-extractive knowledge co-production. Several articles present concrete models for achieving this epistemic shift.

The establishment of the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) in Freetown directly attempts to reverse the dominant model of academic cooperation, which often extracts intellectual resources based on Northern agendas. SLURC promotes a decolonial knowledge co-production model founded on partnership with equivalence, prioritizing research agendas set by local needs. By training and employing local citizen-scientists from informal settlements, SLURC actively combats epistemic injustice and ensures that knowledge is relevant and accessible to local actors, strengthening national academic capacity. **Rigon** emphasizes that SLURC acts as a crucial knowledge broker mediating between academic, governmental, and subaltern systems. This hybrid model, despite structural challenges (such as competitive salaries and institutional tensions), demonstrates a viable pathway for transforming academic cooperation into an infrastructure for spatial and social justice.

In Fortaleza, Brazil, **Frota** investigates how communities in precarious settlements (Grande Bom Jardim) utilize situated and subaltern knowledge to confront climate injustice. Community actions like Ecological Trails and the Cli-

mate March rely on an intimate, practical understanding of the territory derived from necessity and resistance. These self-organized practices serve as both survival mechanisms and political tools to gain internal and external visibility, challenge environmental racism, and contest top-down technocratic planning (e.g., ineffective dam projects or zoning changes). The finding that "the mind thinks where the feet stand" (*A cabeça pensa onde os pés pisam*) underscores the intrinsic link between territorial mastery and effective climate action, validating subaltern epistemologies as essential for developing equitable strategies.

Further illustrating the decolonization of practice, the collaborative workshop between Global South (PUCE) and North (UNIFI) universities in Quito/Nayón focused on transport. **Alberti et al.** explicitly sought three counter-hegemonic shifts: geographical (centering the knowledge-producing institution in the GS), epistemological (prioritizing qualitative, community-based methods over quantification), and empirical (engaging with informal transport realities). This process, involving direct fieldwork, focus groups with local stakeholders, and hosting by local families, confirmed that sustainable solutions must be place-based and co-developed, resisting the imposition of 'à la carte' solutions from the Global North.

*III. Designing equitable futures: justice at scale*
The concept of justice is applied across micro,

urban, and bioregional scales, generating tangible alternatives to extractive development. At the micro-scale, **Masiani** examines the school-city threshold in San Francisco de Limache, Chile, as a strategic infrastructure for promoting environmental justice. The project (PAMEPI) reframes proximity not merely as a geographical measure but as a relational and political category. By engaging children and families in co-designing these spaces, the approach validates situated knowledges and aims to anchor ecological regeneration in structurally public infrastructure (schools), thereby resisting the pervasive threat of green gentrification. This model offers a methodology for achieving "green democracy" and redistributing ecological resources in an inclusive manner.

**Di Ruocco** mobilizes Fraser's tripartite model of justice (Recognition, Redistribution, Representation) to evaluate supply chain transformations across six major Global South cities. The goal is to reframe supply chains as instruments of social inclusion. Practices identified, such as integrating informal waste actors in Nairobi and institutionalizing community participation in Bogotá, demonstrate that enhancing resilience requires recognizing informal contributions and restructuring access to infrastructure to correct historical asymmetries.

Finally, **Poli et al.** investigate the transformation of traditional planning through the urban bioregion concept in Vitória, Brazil. This action-research critiques Eurocentric valoriza-

tion of territorial heritage and seeks to value non-codified knowledge systems and historical sites of resistance, specifically the Quilombola community of Araçatiba. The quilombo, founded by descendants of escaped African slaves, serves as a paradigmatic example of collective good and socio-ecological cohesion. By recognizing Araçatiba's history of resistance and its "non-codified territorialization"–rooted in autonomy and cultural identity–the project develops integrated strategies (e.g., strengthening local eco-solidarity economies, improving public mobility for women) to counter metropolitan segregation and external exploitation, representing an action towards a "(r)existing Brazil".

**Shukla and Tiwari** offer a compelling critique on the spatial dimensions of climate injustice in Ahmedabad, India, focusing on extreme urban heat. It demonstrates that heat-related psychosocial stress–such as anxiety and sleep disruption–is not uniformly distributed but clusters spatially in low-income and informal settlements. GIS mapping confirms that areas with elevated Land Surface Temperature (LST) overlap significantly with these vulnerable neighborhoods, which typically lack cooling infrastructure and green public spaces. The paper argues that these consequences result from environmental injustice and structural inequality and advocates for operationalizing planetary justice through equity-focused interventions, requiring the integration of mental health services and the provision of therapeutic, shaded urban spaces in underserved areas.

*IV. Challenging productivism: green transitions and negative externalities*

The Call of paper explicitly solicited contributions on the distorted effects and negative externalities that ambitious ecological transition policies, particularly those driven by the Global North (e.g., the European Green Deal), can impose upon the Global South. **Peragine**'s analysis of wind power development in Puglia, Italy – framed as a territory subject to internal colonialism and uneven capitalist development – directly engages this critique.

Peragine identifies a gyratory planning logic that sustains a productivist and growthist paradigm. This planning strategy exploits existing socio-economic deprivation, such as rural organized abandonment and informal settlements (like the Borgo Mezzanone 'Ghetto'), to justify further infrastructure densification for renewable energy. This process effectively designates specific territories as green sacrifice zones for national and international economic interests. The outcome reveals a profound dialectic of the State's internal dualism, where decarbonization efforts gloss over existing material and social consequences.

The study on supply chains echoes this concern on a global scale, warning that Global North sustainability and circular economy policies, if implemented without regard for local realities or informal economies, risk reinforcing economic

dependencies and exacerbating distributive injustice. **Di Ruocco**'s work frames supply chains as crucial socio-ecological infrastructures, emphasizing that Global South resilience must address the unequal distribution of environmental burdens and the marginalization of informal labor systems. This critical perspective aligns with the Call for papers' focus on unequal exchange and the disproportionate burden borne by historically exploited territories.

*V. Conclusion: addressing the gaps in the transition discourse*

The collective body of work robustly addresses the central challenges outlined by this monographic number of *Contesti* critiquing the legacy of Western planning, documenting the intersecting nature of climate crisis and colonial injustices, and advancing practical models for epistemic and spatial justice through place-based and decolonial methodologies.

However, a critical comparison of the articles against the specific research provocations laid out in the Call for papers reveals certain themes that were either only lightly touched upon or entirely absent, suggesting future research directions for the journal:

1. The Call for paper explicitly requested research into the negative effects of the creation of global carbon credit markets based on global transactions. While **Peragine** critiques the productivism of the Green Transition in Italy and **Di Ruocco** highlights the risks of Global North-cen-

tric policies, no article provides a focused investigation into how the market mechanisms of carbon credits are currently functioning in the Global South, including the displacement of effects or the creation of constraints on land use for local communities.

2. Following the carbon credit market theme, the Call for paper specifically solicited contributions on displacement and land grabbing resulting from the constitution of vast areas intended for carbon credit generation through Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) or pseudo-sustainable biofuels. While **Masiani** advocates for small-scale, greening initiatives that resist gentrification and **Frota** documents community-led ecological practices, the focus remains on positive, community-centric or infrastructural NBS. The critical examination of formalized, large-scale NBS projects implemented for global offsetting purposes—where the potential for unequal exchange (land subtraction, biofuel production) is highest—is largely missing. The articles critique the *productivism* and *ideology* of external interventions (Auroville, Jakarta, Foggia) but do not concentrate empirically on the specific dynamics of land acquisition driven by the *NBS/biofuel offset economy*.

3. **Shukla and Tiwari**'s work on Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan (HAP) strongly advocates for integrating psycho-social dimensions and eco-psychology into adaptation strategies. However, it explicitly acknowledges that the economic feasibility and cost-effectiveness of

the necessary psychosocial interventions into adaptation strategies remain unassessed, a critical limitation that requires future investigation for scalable implementation. This practical aspect of financing equitable, human-centered transitions remains a challenge to be fully explored.

In summary, the volume focuses on the spatial, political, and epistemic dimensions of Southern Transitions, particularly through the lens of colonial legacies and situated resistance. However, the specific material and economic consequences stemming from the newest iteration of global environmental policy – namely, the mechanics and justice outcomes of formalized carbon offset markets and related large-scale NBS land acquisitions – represent a frontier left largely open. This highlights the necessity for further research on the unequal exchange dynamics defined by the Global North's climate transition agenda.

**Attributions**

This paper is the result of a joint reflection by the authors. Section 1, 5 and 7 was written by Elena Tarsi; section 2 and 4 by Cassandra Fontana, Section 6 by Andrea Testi and Section 3 by Elena Tarsi and Cassandra Fontana.

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