



PROCEEDINGS 2026-20

Local Regional Studies Network

How Capitalism Affirms its Hegemony: The Imperial Mode of Living

Public Lecture Proceedings

02 September 2025 | 1:00 - 5:00 PM

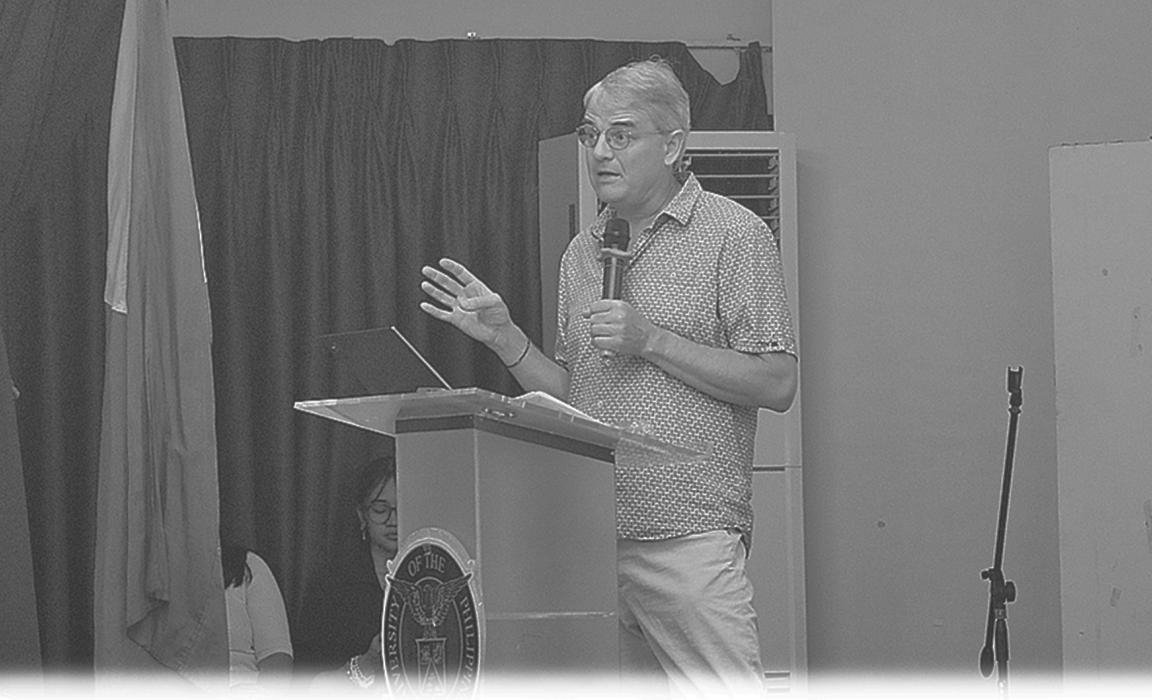
Performing Arts Hall, University of the Philippines Cebu
(Hybrid - Face-to-Face and Zoom)

Mari Elise Gwyneth Lim



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UP CIDS PROCEEDINGS

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Cover Image Credit

"Prof. Ulrich Brand, Professor for International Politics at the Universität Wien, delivered a lecture on the Imperial Mode of Living."

The event was attended by various academics and political science student organizations in Cebu.

Photo by the UP Cebu Public Information Office

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DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES 2026-07

Militant Politics and the Shrinking of Civic Spaces among Peasant Communities in Cebu and Bohol

Regletto Aldrich Imbang



Local Regional Studies Network

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DISCUSSION PAPER

Militant Politics and the Shrinking of Civic Spaces among Peasant Communities in Cebu and Bohol

Proceedings 2025-33

Maayong Pagdumala Alang sa Kalambuan

(Good Governance for Development)

16 July 2024 | 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Diamond Suites & Residences, Cebu City, Philippines
Prepared by Mari Elise Gwyneth Lim and Feil Immanuel Aquino



PROCEEDINGS

Maayong Pagdumala Alang sa Kalambuan
(Good Governance for Development)

About the Proceedings

The UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (CIDS) - Local Regional Studies Network Cebu, together with the UP Cebu Political Science Program and the University of the Philippines Political Science Society, held the public lecture “How Capitalism Affirms Its Hegemony: The Imperial Mode of Living” on September 2, 2025, at the UP Cebu Performing Arts Hall. The event featured Prof. Ulrich Brand of the Department of Political Science of the University of Vienna, whose lecture unpacked how capitalism reproduces its dominance not only through global structures but also through everyday consumption, resource inequalities, and ecological harm. His lecture urged participants to critically examine the intersections of capitalism, imperialism, and the environmental crisis.

UP Cebu Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Palmy Tudtud officially opened the public lecture, emphasizing the relevance of its analysis to the Philippine experience, with the country facing the sharp end of the ecological crisis of capitalism felt greatly in the expansive resource extraction and its local experience of the climate crisis. A panel of reactors (Mr. Jhon Martin Carlos - UP Cebu, Asst. Prof. Dan Ian Niño Jaducana - LRSN UP CIDS, and Ms. Kamille Bascar - UPPSS) deepened the discussion by offering diverse academic, local and regional, and student perspectives.

This lecture was made possible by the support of the Ernst Mach ASEA-Uninet and the Bernd Rode award of LRSN Project Leader Prof. Regletto Aldrich Imbong, PhD.

Event organizers

- Local Regional Studies Network (LRSN), University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS)
- Political Science Program, University of the Philippines Cebu
- UP Political Science Society - UP Cebu

These proceedings were prepared by Mari Elise Gwyneth Lim¹.

¹ Mari Elise Gwyneth Lim is a Junior Research Associate at the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) Local Regional Studies Network (LRSN) Cebu.

How Capitalism Affirms its Hegemony: The Imperial Mode of Living

Prof. Ulrich Brand²

Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Universität Wien

Dr. Ulrich Brand introduced the concept of the “imperial mode of living” (IML) he had developed with Markus Wissen in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis which had led to state-funded programs aimed to “counter the crisis of overproduction.” Brand describes the imperial mode of living as dominant everyday practices in the Global North that depend on the unequal appropriation of labor, resources, and ecological space from the Global South, while appearing normal, desirable, and politically unquestionable. This persists despite explicit policy discourses calling for sustainability, climate action, and global development.

The experience of countries like Germany and Austria in the Global North prompted a central question: why is meaningful social and ecological change so difficult, even when the climate crisis and global inequalities are widely acknowledged? The state-funded scrappage programs exemplified how crisis management often stabilizes existing patterns of production and consumption rather than transforming them. They revealed the deep social acceptance of resource-intensive lifestyles and the political consensus that sustains them. Prof. Brand noted how at an everyday level, there still exists a strong, unbroken attractiveness to the Western way of life, citing the current trends as well of countries in the Global South, such as the Philippines.

2 Ulrich Brand is a professor of International Politics at the Institut für Politikwissenschaft of University of Vienna since 2007. He has published works on sustainability, transformation, degrowth, historical materialist policy analysis, imperial state theory where his research contest in the concept of the imperial mode of living which is the discourse this afternoon. Ulrich is a member of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung where he serves as an academic trustee. As well as a member of the Board of Austrian Foundation for International Development, the SAB of Austrian Institute of International Politics, the Global Working Group Beyond Development, and the Permanent Working Group “Beyond Development” in Latin America.

He also introduced the concept of “crisis externalization,” a key mechanism through which societies in the Global North stabilize themselves amid multiple, overlapping crises. Rather than resolving structural problems internally, governments in Europe and North America shift the social, ecological, and economic burdens of the crisis onto other regions, particularly the Global South and the future. He cites two examples, one being the care crisis in Western Europe where aging populations and underfunded care systems create labor shortages and recruit care workers from countries such as Ukraine, Romania, and the Philippines. While migration offers individuals higher wages and opportunities, it simultaneously drains skilled labor from sending countries, weakening their own care systems. And the other being the climate crisis, where environmental costs are externalized to the future.

Crisis externalization also operates temporally through the climate crisis, where environmental costs are deferred to future generations. Instead of fundamentally altering production and consumption patterns, present societies postpone responsibility, deepening long-term ecological instability.

The core idea of the Imperial Mode of Living, as Prof. Brand notes it, is to

understand the persistence and at the same time, crisis-deepening patterns of production and consumption that are based on the principle of the unlimited appropriation of resources and labor capacity in the global north and in the global south, and claims to global seas, which is [sic] oceans and forests.

Prof. Brand furthermore quotes the book stating how IML is as destructive as it is attractive and productive. He states:

The imperial mode of living is as much an enabling as a coercive relationship, in a big way, into which people are socialized by virtue of belonging to a capitalist society. It is attractive and desirable for many. At the same time, however, one cannot simply escape it.

He explains further how IML is a social and structural category, meant to illustrate the existential and mutual dependencies deeply rooted in economic, political, and cultural relations that lead to unequal opportunities in life.

He presents a central argument developed in his forthcoming work, *Capitalism at the Limit*, which examines how contemporary economic and political elites respond to deepening geopolitical, ecological, and social crises. Contrary to the assumption that powerful actors are inactive, the speaker argues that elites are continuously acting to stabilize their position, legitimize specific policy paths, and shape future trajectories. Drawing from political economy analysis, Brand identifies three competing strategic projects currently structuring global responses to crisis namely: authoritarian stabilization associated with far-right and nationalist politics, ecological modernization or “green capitalism,” solidarity-based transformation which is grounded in democratic, decolonial, and pluriversal principles.

In his concluding remarks, the speaker outlines how societies might transition from an imperial mode of living to a solidary mode of living, emphasizing that this transformation cannot rely solely on individual choices, but requires deep structural and societal change. While personal awareness and behavior matter, the core challenge lies in reorganizing social institutions, economic systems, and power relations.

Drawing from political ecology, the speaker introduces the concept of provisioning systems, which focuses on how everyday needs such as housing, mobility, food, and communication are produced, distributed, and consumed. Transformative alternatives already exist, including non-industrial food systems, reduced car dependence, and strong public housing models, such as Vienna’s municipally owned housing. Reorienting society toward use values rather than exchange values, supported by a strong public sector, democratic deliberation, and open social conflict, is essential for achieving a just and sustainable transformation.

Prof. Brand also proposed degrowth as a concept for reflection rather than a policy prescription for the Global South, thereby addressing ecological destruction and social injustice rooted in capitalism’s imperative of endless growth. It does not celebrate economic decline or crisis; instead, it calls for a deliberate and collective move away from growth as an organizing principle.

Panel of Reactors

Asst. Prof. Dan Ian Nino Jaducana

UP CIDS LRSN, Research Fellow

Research Fellow Dan Jaducana situates the discussion of capitalism and the imperial mode of living within the concrete realities of Cebu drawing connections between global structures of domination and localized experiences of dispossession. As he notes, the imperial mode of living is inherently exclusive, sustained through the disproportionate appropriation of labor, natural resources, and ecological capacity from elsewhere, particularly from marginalized communities in the Global South.

He emphasizes that this system reproduces inequalities through uneven global labor divisions, ecological degradation, and persistent unemployment, while presenting itself as the only viable mode of life. Against this backdrop, he states how an alternative approach must be problematized and constituted to better approach grassroots agency and challenges to development in communities in the Philippines.

Jaducana presents three cases from Cebu to illustrate how the imperial mode of living manifests locally. First, farmers in western Cebu who face land dispossession due to land-use conversion favoring industrial and corporate expansion. Second, a fisherfolk community experiences harassment from naval and coast guard forces as they resist displacement caused by large-scale housing developments linked to local political elites.

The third case involves market vendors and workers at Carbon Public Market, historically a public space serving ordinary consumers in Cebu where proposed “modernization” and privatization initiatives threaten to displace vendors and transform the market into a commercial hub catering to elites. Echoing critical scholarship, the speaker suggests that the decay of Carbon Public Market symbolizes deeper contradictions within neoliberal urban development.

Jaducana furthers that these localized struggles are not isolated incidents but are embedded within global capitalist dynamics promoting imperialism and foreign ownership under the guise of development. He argues that development should not be equated with industrialized agriculture, luxury housing, or “world-class” infrastructure designed for elite consumption. Rather, such representations reflect how capitalism shapes consciousness through media

and ideological institutions, rendering exclusionary development models both normal and desirable.

Drawing inspiration from the talk of Prof. Brand, Research fellow Dan Jaducana concludes by calling for critical reflection and resistance. He states that the task ahead is to disturb what has been normalized, challenge hegemonic development narratives, and reclaim visions of social good grounded in justice, sustainability, and the lived realities of ordinary people.

Mr. John Martin Carlos

UP Cebu, Instructor

This reaction paper engages with Prof. Brand's lecture by examining how the imperial mode of living manifests not only at the level of states, markets, or global political economy, but also within most basic unit of Philippine society: the family. Drawing from classical and feminist political economy, Mr. John Martin Carlos argues that capitalist relations are deeply embedded in intimate social structures such as the family, particularly in marriage, thereby normalizing inequality and dependence in everyday life.

His analysis traces its theoretical roots to Friedrich Engels, who viewed the family, specifically the marital relationship between husband and wife, as an early and enduring site of capitalist social relations. He states how Engels characterized marriage as mirroring class relations, where the husband occupies the position of the bourgeoisie while the wife assumes the role of the oppressed class. Mr. Carlos explains this further through Ann Kuhn's analysis of marriage contracts, which highlights how institutionalized arrangements grant one spouse (typically the husband) privileged access to the labor of the other (typically the wife). This labor includes reproductive work, such as child-rearing and domestic maintenance, and supportive labor that sustains the husband's participation in the formal economy.

Within the Philippine context, these dynamics are reinforced by enduring patriarchal norms and what Carlos describes as "toxic" traditional family values. In such arrangements, women are often expected to rely economically on men, limiting their autonomy and reproducing unequal power relations. As per Mr. Carlos, this structure closely parallels the imperial mode of living, which operates through unequal chances that compel participation in exploitative systems. Just as individuals and societies are forced to conform to global capitalism due to structural constraints, women in oppressive marital

arrangements are often left with little choice but to submit to unequal family structures to survive.

He further argues that traditional beliefs, such as the notion that women should “marry up” or marry wealthy men as a means of escaping poverty, function as ideological mechanisms that normalize dependence and reproduce class and gender hierarchies. These beliefs embed the imperial mode of living into family life by framing economic reliance as natural, desirable, and inevitable.

He classifies the commodification of marriage itself as another manifestation of the imperial mode of living within the family. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony, Carlos explains how social media and popular culture promote extravagant weddings as symbols of success, status, and legitimacy. Even to the point where couples without the means to afford such displays feel pressured to conform, internalizing elite norms of consumption.

In his conclusion, Mr. Carlos emphasizes that Prof. Brand’s concept of the imperial mode of living offers a powerful analytical lens for understanding Philippine society. It reveals how capitalism and profit-driven growth penetrate even the most intimate aspects of life, shaping family relations, gender roles, and cultural aspirations. By exposing these hidden dynamics, the imperial mode of living enables us to have a deeper understanding of how structural inequalities are reproduced at every level of social life.

Ms. Kamille Bascar

UP Political Science Society, BA Political Science

UP Cebu Political Science student Kamille Bascar centers her analysis around three central themes: hegemony and ideology, globalization, and political ecology, concluding with a question regarding the feasibility of degrowth.

Her first theme addresses hegemony and ideology, drawing on Mark Fisher’s concept of capitalist realism, best understood through the phrase “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.” Ms. Bascar states how Prof. Brand’s lecture highlights precisely this condition: the deep embedding of the imperial mode of living in social consciousness, making alternatives difficult to envision. Even countercultural movements often fail to escape this logic. In the Philippine context, Bascar argues that this is captured by the phrase “*kinain ng sistema*” (consumed by the system), which recognizes that

individuals educated in critical or oppositional environments are eventually absorbed into dominant structures.

Referencing Freud and Edward Bernays, Ms. Bascar notes how advertising and mass culture have shaped desires, encouraging individualism and consumer aspiration. As a result, even the most marginalized groups aspire not to transform the system, but to gain inclusion within it. In Philippine politics, this manifests in weak ideological party structures and the dominance of personality politics, where admiration for Western credentials and elite status replaces substantive political programs. The imperial mode of living thus operates through consent as much as coercion.

The second theme focuses on globalization and the challenge of making degrowth a global project. Bascar contrasts contemporary globalization with earlier forms, such as the Silk Road, which allowed slower exchanges and localized skill development. In contrast, present-day globalization reinforces dependency, particularly between the Global North and Global South. Southern economies often rely on Northern innovation and are confined to low-skilled labor roles under the logic of comparative advantage. This reproduces global inequality and undermines the capacity of the Global South to chart autonomous development paths. The speaker raises doubts about whether degrowth is feasible under such unequal global conditions.

The third theme examines political ecology, using the case of urban transport policy in Manila to illustrate the contradictions of “green” initiatives. The capital city’s vehicle coding scheme, intended to reduce traffic congestion and emissions, has instead incentivized wealthier residents to purchase multiple vehicles, thereby worsening the problem. Similarly, exemptions for electric and hybrid vehicles shift environmental responsibility onto ordinary citizens while privileging those who can afford greener technologies. This reflects a broader critique raised in Prof. Brand’s lecture wherein ecological policies often place the burden of adjustment on the masses while leaving structural inequalities and elite consumption patterns intact.

In her concluding statement, Ms. Bascar reaffirms the thesis that societies must overcome the capitalist growth imperative through degrowth, but also raises a crucial question: who plans degrowth? In the Philippine context, fragmented political institutions, competing interests, and weak coordination among government actors pose serious obstacles to long-term transformative planning, thereby underscoring the need to critically examine not only the goals of degrowth, but also its political agents and institutional conditions.

Response from the Speaker

Prof. Ulrich Brand responded to the panel of reactors by emphasizing that the discussion has revealed the concrete social conflicts and the growing failure of modernization's promises. Across different contexts, capitalism and modernization are shown to be deeply intertwined with pure violence, with the modernization of violence shaping everyday life through unequal power relations, exploitation, and exclusion. Concepts such as hegemony and the imperial mode of living are highlighted as crucial analytical tools that enable us to better understand complex theories within our own lived social realities.

Engaging with the analysis of Mr. Carlos, Prof. Brand underscores how fascinating is the analysis of the positioning of gender relations and the division of labor. He relates this to how feminist struggles overcome women's dependency within traditional family structures. Prof. Brand states that a historically significant response to this dependency has been the welfare state, which he describes as an institutionalized form of solidarity that "de-risks" individual lives through public rights and social protection, wherein the principal idea is to overcome the said interpersonal tension.

Prof. Brand brings the discussion then to social media as a defining public sphere of the twenty-first century. A space where people understand themselves, communicate, and engage with social conflict. He argues that social media then cannot be private, and it is in reality, profit-driven evidenced in money-making advertising through a tailored algorithm for the user. He argues for the need to socialize social media, asserting that a genuinely democratic public sphere cannot be governed by advertising logics and corporate profit.

Finally, on counterculture and education, the Prof. Brand cites Max Horkheimer's concept of the "non-conformist intellectual." Universities, he argues, should not only produce skilled professionals, but also cultivate individuals capable of critical reflection within their future workplaces and social roles. He states how his teaching philosophy is also aimed toward the training of students as good political scientists, preparing students to think critically on the concrete conditions of their future employment.

Open Forum

Question Set 1

1. “How do we envision a degrowth economy? Would the new hegemony become a multiplex, would it be cultural considering the rise of interest in cultural heritage especially in Cebu?”
2. “With the rise of emerging economies like that of China and their adoption of the imperial mode of living that has led to the intense eco-imperial tensions and competition over resources, what are the economic drivers and consequences of this competition? How would it affect global trade and investment patterns, as well as the ability to achieve international sustainability goals?”
3. “Citing the experience of China as an example of how authoritarianism has been somewhat effective in curbing capital valorization, a condition of the imperial mode of living, what are the inabilities of democracy and confronting this logic of capitalism (capital valorization)? And how can democracy for the Global North but most especially for the Global South, be revolutionized to properly confront capital valorization?”

Response from Dr. Ulrich Brand

Prof. Brand situates the first question within a broader reflection on the liberal capitalist state and its structural dependence on economic growth. Drawing from a recently published paper in *Nature Climate Change*, he argues that the legitimacy, fiscal capacity, and scope of action of liberal states are fundamentally tied to continuous growth. States require expanding economic activity to generate income, taxation, and political legitimacy, creating a structural obstacle to meaningful decarbonization. As a result, decarbonization cannot simply be a technical or market-driven adjustment but must involve moving beyond ecological globalization and confronting the growth imperative itself.

Decarbonization, in this view, requires a process of de-valorization, not only of carbon-intensive practices but of dominant forms of capitalist production and consumption more broadly. Prof. Brand illustrates this through the example of mobility: replacing 50 million combustion cars with 50 million electric vehicles reproduces the same logic of valorization. A genuinely transformative approach would instead reduce the total number of cars while investing in collective public infrastructure. Although such a shift would initially require

public investment, it would ultimately result in a smaller economy with lower material throughput. Similar arguments apply to industrial food systems and fast fashion, which exemplify the destructive consequences of growth-driven provisioning. The daily transport of commodities by dozens of cargo planes from China to Europe is cited as a stark illustration of the irrationality of the growth imperative.

Prof. Brand then introduces a key concept from his forthcoming work: the need to analyze geopolitical, geo-economic, and ecological tensions together, rather than treating them as separate domains. He argues that ecological pressures intensify global competition over land, labor, and resources. Practices once associated with the Global North, such as land grabbing, are now also pursued by China, including competition for labor in countries like the Philippines. These eco-economic tensions are further compounded by climate-induced crises, such as the devastating floods in Pakistan that displaced tens of millions of people. As climate impacts worsen, ecological crises will increasingly destabilize geopolitical relations, especially in politically and militarily sensitive regions.

Finally, Prof. Brand addresses the question of authoritarianism and state power. While leaders like Xi Jinping or Putin appear capable of restraining certain capitalist actors, this does not represent a genuine alternative, as their systems remain growth-oriented and oligarchic. Instead, the speaker calls for a “democratization of democracy.” Liberal democracy, he argues, fails to challenge property relations and economic power. A democratic response must include economic democracy, the devaluation of destructive energy regimes, and the empowerment of workers to co-manage production. Such transformations are long-term processes but constitute the core of a democratic ecological agenda.

Response from Kamille Bascar

Ms. Kamille Bascar responds to the question on democracy’s inability to confront capitalism and capital valorization by distinguishing between formal and informal democracy. Formal democracy refers to institutional mechanisms such as elections, voting, and political participation, while informal democracy encompasses substantive values like free speech, material security, and decent standards of living. Ms. Bascar argues that formal democratic mechanisms are highly vulnerable to co-optation, echoing Noam Chomsky’s concept of the “manufacturing of consent.” Democratic indices often focus narrowly on elections while neglecting whether genuine freedom and social well-being exist.

She argues that this limitation is illustrated through examples from Africa, where elections may formally exist but are undermined by coercion and violence, resulting in hollow democracy. The comparison with China further complicates this picture: although China ranks poorly in formal democratic terms, it has delivered higher material standards of living than countries like the Philippines. While not endorsing authoritarianism, the speaker argues this contrast reveals the need to rethink democratic priorities.

The discussion then turns to economic democracy, particularly private property and rent-seeking. In the Philippine context, large amounts of land remain unproductive due to elite control, worsening inequality and living conditions. She contends that economic democracy, ensuring productive, socially beneficial use of resources, is essential and should be central to democratic evaluation, as it directly relates to people's material well-being.

Question Set 2

1. "How do we incentivize major stakeholders like the state, private businesses, and the elite, to participate in order for degrowth to be likely?"
2. "How can we speak of solidarity of justice and equality when the way of sacrifice is only through the shoulders of the poor while the structures of imperial power remain firmly intact? Until this global standard is dismantled, what hope is there of dismantling the imperial hegemony that continues to divide our present world?"
3. "What are the speaker's thoughts on the rise of the Asian Century which proposes that it is now time for Asian Countries to take the center stage not only politically and economically, but also ideologically. Presupposing an 'Asian Mindset' that is unique and special especially in Asia. There exists a lot of contention about this especially that Asia is a fragmented part of the world, but more importantly that it supposes a decoloniality that is somehow awkward in its push for a new hegemony?"

Response from Prof. Ulrich Brand

Prof. Ulrich Brand brings the discussion toward strategies to confront capitalist valorization and open spaces for systemic transformation, emphasizing both concrete policy tools and critical analysis. First, they highlight taxation as a historically proven and powerful instrument of de-valorization. After the Second World War, even liberal capitalist states such as the United States

imposed high asset taxes on the wealthy. Today, renewed calls to tax the rich, such as those made by leftist social democrats in Austria, are met with intense political and media resistance, illustrating how threatening such measures are to entrenched interests. Alongside taxation, workers' struggles, particularly campaigns to raise living wages, are identified as another key form of de-valorization, since higher wages directly reduce capital accumulation and challenge existing power relations from within the system.

A second major theme, Prof. Brand notes, is the double standard between the Global North and Global South. The speaker rejects the expectation that poor communities in the Global South should bear the moral burden of justice and solidarity, noting that these communities often already practice solidarity out of necessity. Instead, there is a need for shared struggles across North and South aimed at creating a new international economic order, one that is non-colonial, non-imperial, and not structured solely in favor of the strongest economies. Reviving demands from the 1970s for systemic global reform is presented as both urgent and currently underdeveloped.

He then turns to critical pragmatism, arguing that analysis should not present power as monolithic or closed. Rather, critical analysis must reveal contradictions, tensions, and cracks within power structures. Doing so already creates openings for resistance and alternatives. Analysis and practice should be integrated, drawing from fieldwork, existing struggles, countercultures, and everyday forms of resistance rather than relegating alternatives to a final theoretical chapter.

Within institutions, especially universities, Prof. Brand introduces the concept of "transformative cells" which are engaged subgroups within organizations that push beyond routine practices to advance justice, ecological responsibility, and gender equality, and strengthening such cells is essential for institutional change.

Finally, Prof.. Brand points to the Eco-Social and Intercultural Pact of the South, developed by scholars and activists in Latin America as an alternative to initiatives like the European Green Deal and U.S. inflation policies, which are seen as reproducing new forms of pre-colonial domination, thereby underscoring the need to rethink Southern realities and reshape North-South relations through genuinely alternative frameworks.

Response from Asst. Prof. Dan Ian Niño Jaducana

Asst. Prof. Jaducana explains that the burden is often unfairly placed on poor people due to a horizontal perspective that encourages blaming individuals, rather than addressing structural causes. For example, flooding is commonly attributed to people littering, which creates social competition and victim-blaming which obscures an institutional or vertical perspective, where factors such as inadequate drainage systems, industrialization, and urban planning failures play a much larger role. He argues that power structures benefit from this shift in blame, as it diverts attention from systemic responsibility.

He further connects this to debates on capitalism and democracy, noting that dominant ideas of “development” in the Philippines are shaped by corporate interests and emphasize large infrastructure projects. He states how a more democratic approach would prioritize listening to grassroots perspectives and understanding development as defined by communities themselves, linking democracy to resisting capitalist narratives imposed from above.

Response from Ms. Kamille Bascar

Ms. Bascar extends the discussion on critical pragmatism by examining contradictions within “Gen Z.” Although Gen Z is often viewed as highly progressive due to open discourse on social media, she notes a parallel rise in authoritarian attitudes, particularly among young, working-class men. Groups often misdirect their frustrations toward scapegoats such as women and immigrants rather than structural power. Her example of Brexit illustrates how political actors like Nigel Farage successfully mobilized fear by framing immigrants as threats, using powerful imagery and simplified narratives to win popular support.

Echoing Prof. Brand, Ms. Bascar emphasizes the importance of exposing the “cracks” in power and clearly identifying the real sources of social and economic problems. This requires moving beyond surface-level blame to address deeper causes such as inequality, capitalism, and climate change. Migration, she argues, should be understood in relation to these structural crises rather than demonized. As climate change intensifies, authoritarian tendencies are likely to grow, with strongmen offering exclusionary solutions. In response, she calls for greater attention to the realities of the Global South, both as a source of insight and a call to challenge misleading and dangerous political narratives.

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Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

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