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Nature as a subaltern

The colonial power of corporations over the environment and
humans

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Abstract

In this essay I attempt to examine corporations through the lens of postcolonial theory in order to investigate whether corporations and their actions can be better understood using a post-colonial analysis. I have investigated if we can understand corporations as transnational power structures rather than as only commercial businesses and what new perspectives that could give us. In my research I have attempted to answer the question “Are corporate actions turning nature into a Subaltern?” by using a case study analysing Monsanto’s history of operations and applying postcolonial theories exploring any potential meaningful links. I hope that applying post-colonial theory to our understanding of corporations can help in understanding the power they hold and the consequences of that power. Further I hope that applying a post-colonial lens can bring a deeper understanding and a new perspective to the way the, supposedly, increasing powers of transnational corporations affect nature and humans.

Post-colonial theory has been essential in understanding the repercussions of colonial power structures on our “post”-colonial world. It has been essential in questioning and moving away from the western-centric mindset that has in many ways shaped our modern world. I wonder if post-colonial theory can do to our understanding of corporate powers (and business as usual) what it did to our understanding of colonial state-led powers. With this thesis I seek to illustrate how post-colonial concepts can shine a much needed new light and understanding to the power structures that are currently governing our world so that we can move forward with less violence and more justice when we go on to create our collective future.

Keywords: Corporations, Nature, Colonial Power, Monsanto, Post-colonial theory

Table of Content

Innehåll

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Research questions	2
1.2	Methods and Material	3
1.3	Relevance for Human Ecology	4
2	Theoretical Framework.....	5
3	Background	9
3.1	Corporations, what are they?	9
3.2	The institutions behind the economic activities of corporations	11
3.2.1	The IMF and The World Bank.....	11
3.2.2	The World Trade Organisation	12
3.3	Agriculture and the Agro-industrial complex.....	13
3.4	Monsanto the Company – From chemicals to agriculture	15
4	Monsanto vs the World	16
4.1	Monsanto in the global south – Indian seeds of suicide	16
4.2	Percy Schmeiser and the patent on life.....	18
4.3	Argentina and the invasion of Roundup-Ready soybeans.....	21
4.4	The story of Anniston	24
4.5	Superweeds and Superpests.....	24
5	Discussion	26
5.1	Institutional control and systemic domination	26
5.2	The immortality of Monsanto.....	28
5.3	Nature as a Subaltern.....	29
6	Conclusion	32
7	References.....	33

1 Introduction

Growing up in an area of time and space where capitalism was portrayed as not only highly functional but necessary, I often heard that if left alone the market would take care of itself. The idea that through the logic of supply and demand capitalism would manage to create a world that was just and beneficial for everyone was drilled into my mind simply through living in the part of the world that was the biggest benefiter of the capitalistic system. It took me a long time to even start questioning these capitalistic ideas because honestly, who doesn't want it to be true? Who doesn't want a system to be able to bring about efficiency, growth and development and at the same time be controlled and held accountable by those (us) who "vote with our dollars"? The, in my opinion, illusion that if a company did wrong they would be put out of business and not survive since conscious consumers would know better than to support their business, is proven wrong time and time again as we see big corporations wreak havoc around the world with little to no consequences for their business. My whole life the logic of the self-managing market has been used as a proof that as long as companies are economically thriving whatever they are doing to make their money cannot be so bad. Because if it was bad, they would have been put out of business as the demand of their product would decline. This, seemingly, blind trust in the efficiency of the market plays right into the hands of multinational corporations since it allows them to continue to make the world into their playing grounds and exploit both human and natural resources seemingly unrestricted. Some might call this specific type of capitalism "predatory capitalisms" and argue that "true" capitalism would not enable exploitation to the extent we today experience. Predatory or not, the current economic system we have is enabling multinational corporations to exploit nature on behalf of their own economic interest. And we are only seeing an increase in these actions despite the promises of the self-regulating market.

A system that allows actions that are exploiting and destroying the very natural world we need for our survival only because it generates an economical growth is in my opinion flawed. But this is not a thesis about the problems and transgressions of capitalism. This thesis is an attempt to understand the structures that let economic growth overtake environmental and human health on the scale of importance. Perhaps naively, I do believe that if the importance of nature was really truly understood and valued in our culture, we would not allow it to be sacrificed on the altar of economic growth as easily as we do now. When I use the term we I do not necessarily refer to the individual consumer as I withdraw from the all too common tendency of putting the blame and responsibility of the ways of the world on the shoulders of individuals instead of the multi-billion dollar businesses that directly benefit from depleting the earth. But I do think that if we truly understood how dependent we are on a healthy earth we would not create a system where nature is seen first as a commodity and last as a source of life.

And this is where it, to me, gets very interesting. Why have nature and the importance of it descended lower and lower on the scale of importance? And why do we seem to okay violent actions towards nature (and therefore our collective future) with the logic that it is "just nature", "just water" and "just a forest". I use post-colonial concepts to try to tackle these questions and ask myself whether the actions of multinational corporations can be compared to colonial actions and endeavours and if this is sub-altering nature in the same way that colonized humans were. Can we understand the Corporate – Nature relation using these postcolonial concepts and what does that do to our understanding of our relationship to nature? This is what I seek to explore and understand in my thesis.

1.1 Research questions

Power structures, local and global, have in one way or another always affected the world and the ones living within it. When local powers ruled it was easier to source the centre of that power. It was easier to understand where and why decisions were being made and it was easier to oppose them. It was also easier to see the implications of decisions and actions since there was no disassociation between the locations of decision making and the location of the action. As the world become increasingly globalised the source of governing becomes progressively harder to track, and unjust decisions harder to oppose. With the help of economic and trade institutions the source of power is moved more and more into the hands of large economic entities, corporations, and further away from people and local governing (New internationalist 2002). Today's global economic systems have had severe and devastating effects on our social and natural world. The trade-off between economic growth and environmental health has never been larger as it is exceptionally easy to exploit natural resources for economical gain (Perkins 2004). Through using Monsanto, an agrobusiness and biotechnological corporation, as an example I seek to explore this trade-off and investigate whether these power structures and the corporate actions they enable are turning nature into a subaltern. Because one can wonder why, in our most advanced and technologically developed state, we fail to live without destroying our natural environment, the very thing that keeps us alive.

It is from questions like this I draw my two research questions.

1. Through the case of Monsanto, how can we understand how the agro-industrial complex/agri-business has turned nature into a subaltern?
2. What role are institutions, legal structures and economical logic playing in the subalternation of nature?

1.2 Methods and Material

The purpose of my thesis is to investigate whether corporations and their actions can be understood within the frameworks of post-colonial theory and as transnational power structures rather than as only commercial businesses. Further, my thesis will investigate what impact corporations, supposedly, increasing powers can have on humans and the environment and if the actions of corporations are making nature into a subaltern.

To approach my questions, I need to explore the consequences of corporate actions within the framework of postcolonial theory to explore if we can understand the repercussions on nature, environment and humans better if we apply a postcolonial lens to our analysis. Globally, there are more transnational companies than are possible to mention and therefore in my thesis I have chosen to focus on Monsanto, a US owned bioengineering and agriculture corporation. I have chosen to take a case study approach to my thesis where I use a case study of Monsanto's actions to understand how corporations operate in the global south and the implications for coloniality. A case study method is useful when an in depth understanding of a specific case is needed. A case study can be both qualitative and quantitative depending on what methods were used to generate the data for the case (Bryman 2012:66-67) In my case I will conduct a case study for five different incidents involving Monsanto products. I will study the implications of BT cotton in India, Percy Schmeiser's legal battle over patent infringement in the USA, Soybean seeds in Argentina, the lawsuit in Anniston and the by-product of superweeds and superpests following a use of Monsanto's products.

The source of material I'm using for my case study are two documentaries; *Bitter seeds*, that follow Indian farmers in the aftermath of BT Cotton seeds and *David versus Monsanto* that documents the lawsuits involving Percy Schmeiser and Monsanto. In addition, I'm using scientific testing results presented in the book *The World According to Monsanto* by Marie-Monique Robin and from books and articles written by Vandana Shiva. I'm also drawing on the ethnographic accounts presented in Robin's book that gives an in-depth understanding of the implications of Monsanto's actions on human and natural life. Therefore, the information I will be studying is a mix of both qualitative and quantitative research since it is both based in human experiences and scientific data. I believe that this give me a broad understanding of the case I'm studied.

Due to the textual nature of my subject most of my data will be gathered using text analysis of post-colonial theory and corporate procedures. In addition to the analysis of post-colonial theory and Monsanto operations I have analysed legal structures and institutions that are intertwined with corporate actions, such as the WTO, the IMF and World Bank.

One limitation of the thesis is that I was not able to collect the first-hand accounts myself through primary data collection due to time and resource constraints. Therefore I used secondary data analysis when investigating corporations current and historic actions and its consequences. I choose to also use secondary content analysis, a method where you analyse data collected by other researchers (Bryman 2012:312), since a plethora of research, much better than what I could ever produce in my short time span, has already been made

concerning the relationship, or perhaps clash, between corporations, humans and environment. Analysing secondary data can be beneficial both regarding time and quality but I will have to take extra precaution to make sure that I clearly communicate that the data used is secondary. I also need to take the time to become familiar with the data to avoid misinterpretations (Bryman 2012:312-315). To further ensure that all the data I used is collected and analysed from an honest and objective place, I need to reflect over my own positionality and make sure that I apply reflexivity when I go about to study my data (Bryman 2012:393-394).

I believe that using ethnographic accounts of the consequences of corporate actions will help to avoid the risk of my thesis being too heavily based in theory and not connected enough to reality and people's experiences (Bryman 2012: 179). People's experiences with multinational corporations gathered through secondary data analysis, mainly through the book *The World According to Monsanto*, will be an important addition to my data (Bryman 2012:399,401). Qualitative research is often criticised for not being objective enough to qualify as scientific but can, when made correctly, give an insight that quantitative data cannot (Bryman 2012:405).

Through the case study, the text analysis, post-colonial theory and the secondary data analysis I hope to bridge the gap between theory and reality and to test and triangulate the theories against real experiences and perceptions (Bryman 2012:380 387, 392 & 633). My hope with the thesis is to form or enhance a platform from which we can understand corporations, in our modern globalised world, in a deeper sense than as just commercial businesses in order to better understand and predict the consequences of their actions on both humans and the environment.

1.3 Relevance for Human Ecology

As a human ecologist one is concerned with the human relationship to its built, social and natural environment through a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach. Considering this, the power relation between corporation and our natural world and the ramifications it produces are of high importance when we try to understand our world from a human ecology perspective. If the depletions of our natural world can be traced back, at least to some extent, to corporate actions it is of great importance that we understand the economic structures and power relations that enables these actions. I believe that adding a post-colonial lens to the understanding of human - nature relations will deepen our understanding of it. Re-conceptualizing around nature as a subaltern could further our understanding of nature and recognize that in our modern world nature is predominantly seen as a resource rather than a source. In doing so I hope to add a trajectory to the already existing conversation of the human – nature relationship and I therefore consider this subject relevant to human ecology discourse.

2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for my thesis is based in post-colonial theory, predominantly around the concept of the “subaltern”, theorized by Gayatri Spivak and the power-knowledge relationship made famous by Michael Foucault and Edward Said.

In trying to understand nature in postcolonial concepts the term subaltern is essential. The concept of the subaltern was not coined by Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak but frequently used and theorized by her. It is an important term in understanding any oppressed group in society (Frenning 2018). In a previous thesis I wrote in 2018 where I also used the concept of the “subaltern” as my theoretical framework I presented the concept as follows:

In her paper *Can the subaltern speak?* Spivak elaborates on the term and states that according to her, the subaltern or the subaltern state, is someone that cannot speak or a place from which speaking is not possible (Spivak, 1988). Spivak has been criticized for this expression and accused for silencing the subaltern or taking away their voices (Spivak, 1999). The key to understanding her expression lies, in my opinion, in the word “speak”, what does speak really mean?

Spivak sees speaking as creating discourse more than the physical act of speaking itself (Spivak, 1988). In saying that the subaltern cannot speak she is not saying that speaking itself is impossible for the subaltern or from a subaltern position, but that what is being said is not being heard. The voices of the subaltern have no social-political agency, are not taken seriously and are not being allowed to generate discourse by the dominant power in society (Spivak, 1988). Therefore the subaltern, in Spivak’s words, cannot speak. The subaltern state is that what is not accepted by the hegemonic power in society and deviates from the “norm”. Speaking from this position is possible but will not be seen, in that society, as respectable or as being able to create discourse.

Since the dominant power, the “not-subaltern” and those who can speak, are the only ones capable of creating discourse they are the only ones who can amplify the voices of the subaltern. But letting the elite speak on behalf of the subaltern is only furthering the act of stealing their voices (Spivak 1988). Spivak argues that by speaking **for** the subaltern we are only perpetuating our own non-subaltern experiences and the subaltern is still not being listened to. Others are speaking about the subaltern’s issues and situations, but they are still not given the right to speak for themselves.

Spivak explains the dangers of letting the elite speak on behalf of the subaltern in telling the story of sati, a Hindu tradition of widow self-immolation, in both *Can the subaltern speak* and the book *A critique of postcolonial reason*.

The colonizing powers of India wanted to legalize the practise of Sati on the grounds that it was murder and in doing so claimed to give agency to the Hindu women. Spivak however categorize this act as something she famously calls “White men saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak 1998,1999). What Spivak mean by this, in my words, is that in taking this role as the saviour of the Hindu (brown) woman the white man is justifying his colonization, violence and oppression of the Hindu women (and man) as an act of chivalry. In doing so he portrays the Indian society as barbaric and justifies colonisation of it by masking it as a much-needed civilising mission. Even though the white man claimed to be speaking for the Hindu women, a subaltern, he still perpetuated his own experiences and own interests in doing so. The Hindu women remained a subaltern in the colonized society (Spivak, 1999).

Speaking for the subaltern in this way leaves no room for deviation amongst the subaltern. Some women choose self-immolation, as was the situation in the story of the Rani (Spivak, 1999), and some women certainly didn't. Without going into the rights and wrongs of the practise of Sati, an illegalization of Sati by the colonizing powers did not lift the Hindu woman out of subalternation. Speaking for the subaltern did not give them a voice.

Spivak argues that a more ethical action would be to instead of speaking in their place enable the subalterns to speak for themselves in order to lift themselves out of the subaltern state (Spivak, 1988). To do that the dominant powers needs to learn from the subaltern, learn about their situation and their needs and desires. The difficulty here lies in how one learns from someone who cannot speak and is not being allowed to express themselves. (Frenning 2018)

I will use the concept of the subaltern to explore nature's role and lot in our modern agro-industrial model. In other words; Can nature be understood as a subaltern and if so, can that help us explain and understand the violent ways we often relate to our natural environment?

As I try to understand nature from within postcolonial theory, the concept of knowledge and power is unavoidable. When writing about knowledge and power in the context of colonialism there are two men that must be mentioned; Michael Foucault and Edward Said. The combined work by these two thinkers laid the groundwork to how we understand knowledge and analyse it from a postcolonial perspective. Their work has helped to problematise what is seen as true knowledge and to decolonialise our understanding of knowledge by questioning why some knowledge is centred as the norm and some is dismissed.

Michael Foucault is well known for his writings about power/knowledge relations and argues that power and knowledge cannot be separated but are inherently interrelated. (Foucault 1972:191). According to Foucault all discourse and knowledge is influenced by the episteme in which it is created. An episteme is a certain worldview that postulates a specific norm and structure of thought that is accepted and backed by the hegemonic powers as objective truth and therefore non avoidable for those living in that society or episteme (Foucault 1972). Foucault draws on Gramsci's idea of hegemony, a term explaining the dominant power in society, when he theorizes around the concept of episteme that he uses to explain that what is seen as correct will be what is supported and okayed by the hegemonic powers. The knowledge that is produced in that area of time and space will inevitably be influenced by what the hegemonic powers deem to be correct (Foucault 1972).

The reason why western knowledge has been dominant throughout history is not due to a superior nature of that knowledge but rather due to colonial violence and domination that successfully silenced other voices and centred its own as a benchmark for truth (Said, 1978). Through colonial violence a one-sided view of history could be produced as objective knowledge since it was backed by the then hegemonic power; the colonizers. In that way the colonizers could write the history books that would lay the foundational blocks for what would be the norm for centuries to come. Colonizers had to see their knowledge as superior and their ways as the norm in order to justify the colonial endeavours they undertook. Recognizing that their understanding of reality was only one of many would undermine the civilizing mission that colonialism was disguised as (Frenning 2018).

Foucault further argues that knowledge therefore should not be considered an objective reflection of reality since it will always be influenced by power relations and the episteme in which it is created. Knowledge can therefore not be neutral or separated from power (Zhao, 2016). Foucault sees knowledge not as a tool for power but as a foundation of it. With other words; who get to decide what is deemed correct and true inevitably holds a lot of power (Foucault 1972)

It is on these ideas that Edward Said, a Palestinian born, American professor of literature, draws when he writes his book *Orientalism*, that is often seen as the foundation of post-colonial studies. In *Orientalism* Said argues that how the "orient", also called the east, was understood in the post 16th century world was directly dictated by the western produced literature and knowledge about it. The representation of the east in western produced literature was not a realistic description of reality and therefore portrayed a false image that became widely accepted as true by the majority of the world since western ideas were supported by the hegemonic institutions of power (Said, 1978). Said argues that the "east" in this way was produced by the west in order to gain and maintain power over it. If the world understood the east as the west portrayed it; as a mystic and, above all, barbaric place without meaningful discourse of its own, it was easy to justify colonial violence and dominance by masking it as a much needed civilisation and educational mission (Frenning, 2018).

It is here I draw connecting lines to multinational corporate action. Corporations are often allowed to write the book about whatever they are producing. Monsanto's knowledge about GMO is often regarded as the truth and the information that they themselves produce about the effects of their seeds are used as evidence for GMO's success. The many voices of farmers that state differently are not being included in the creation of the discourse about modern agriculture. In this context I'm arguing that corporations operate as the hegemonic powers or at least are backed by them when they exclude farmers voices as they write the book about modern agriculture. Much like the way colonialism distorted the way history has been written and understood, where colonizers are protracted like noble missionaries instead of violent invaders, corporations ability to silence farmers voices has successfully distorted our understanding of modern-industrial agriculture and the affects it has on our environment. I will present examples of this later in my thesis.

3 Background

3.1 Corporations, what are they?

When thinking about the word “Corporation” mental pictures of Amazon, Coca-Cola and Google being carried towards a stockpile of money on the backs of the global south pops up in my head. This might not be a commonly shared understanding of what a corporation is, but it is hard to deny that they are economic entities with the purpose of accumulating money in one way or another. As I ventured further into the historical past and present of corporations it quite quickly dawned on me that I didn't really know what the term “corporation” meant. What does it really mean to be a corporation? What obligations and possibilities comes with the term?

Investopedia (2019) defines the term as follows: “A corporation is a legal entity that is separate and distinct from its owners”. Corporations enjoy most of the rights and responsibilities that individuals hold; they can enter contracts, loan and borrow money, sue and be sued, hire employees, own assets and pay taxes (Investopedia, 2019). They have the same rights and protection as human beings but due to their artificial nature they cannot suffer the same consequences for their actions as humans do. A corporation cannot be sent to prison, it does not suffer from air pollutions or environmental degradation and are not restrained to being at one place at one time. This in combination with the fact that corporations can outlive many generations of humans results in an enormous accumulation of power that would not be possible for just one human being (Rothkopf 2012).

Some would argue that legalising corporate personhood has given them the same, or even a louder, voice than an individual in democratic processes, in this way corporations are included in the decision-making processes due to their personhood but gain a unproportionally big seat due to their power and wealth. In this way they exceed both the limitations of an economic entity and those of an individual person and becomes a powerful decision-making force in society (Rothkopf 2012).

Corporations have since their origin been a strong force in society but how they have functioned and the responsibilities they have had have changed drastically over the years. Initially, prior to the 17th century, corporations were an extension of the government and implemented to serve the public good. (New Internationalist, 2002). Governments had complete control over corporate actions and could momentarily create a corporation to carry out a need in society (Holloran 2018). It was only later when corporations became an important tool in colonial expansions that they became profit oriented and gained a voice of their own even though they were still connected and controlled by the government. Corporations, such as the east Indian company, played a key role in gaining and maintaining control over trade, markets, and territories throughout the global south (New Internationalist, 2002). Considering corporate history, it is hard to argue anything other than that corporations have been intrinsically intertwined with governments and colonialism, some would even argue that corporations have been a foundational building block of colonial empires and

certain governments expansion (New Internationalist, 2002). In the 19th century however, the governmental – corporate relationship changed, and the control of corporations moved from the government to the court, corporations became privatized, gained legal rights and was granted a “personhood” by law and did not have to be connected nor governed by the government anymore (New Internationalist, 2002). This type of corporation that could operate as a private entity, enjoy protection by the law through legal personhood, be owned by shareholders whose personal assets was protected through limited liability and have a purpose and economical interest of their own, separate from the state, is the type of corporations we have today (New Internationalist, 2002).

When corporations were granted legal personhood in the United States the 14th amendment was extended to also apply to them. The 14th amendment states that:

“[...] [N]o state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws” (Legal information institute n.d).

Initially the 14th amendment was implemented by the US court to protect emancipated slaves in the south (Kaplan 2003) but perhaps came to be even more beneficial for corporations as it capacitated them with the freedom and legal right to grow in any way or direction desired (New Internationalist, 2002).

Corporations have gone through quite the remarkable makeover since they served the public on behalf of governments. Today they are private entities with legal rights and personhood with the main goal of creating profit. The globalised free market logic of today’s society in combination with the many legal protections of corporate economic interests poses very few limitations as to how that profit can be created. Corporations have easy access to the global market and can treat both human and natural resources as they were endless and interchangeable. To understand how this is possible we need to take a closer look into the institutions that create and enable the environment in which corporations can flourish. The IMF, the World Bank and the WTO advocates for a certain macro-economic structure that enables corporate autonomy. These institutions can be viewed as gatekeepers of neo-liberal economic structures but are also the ones that are supposed to monitor and make sure that the effects of this structure, is beneficial and sustainable for all.

3.2 **The institutions behind the economic activities of corporations**

In this section I explore the different institutions that facilitate the business of corporations and global economic integration.

3.2.1 **The IMF and The World Bank**

The IMF stands for the International Monetary Fund and was created alongside the World Bank in 1944 as an attempt to restore a stable global economy following the World War II (Imf.org 2019). There are significant differences between the IMF and the World Bank, but they are also very similar. In my thesis I will not go deep enough into the details of the IMF or The World Bank for these differences to matter. I will therefore refer to them interchangeably from now on. The goal of the IMF and the World Bank in their own words are to: “promote international monetary cooperation, support the expansion of trade and economic growth, and discourage policies that would harm prosperity” (Imf.org 2019). They aim to help their member countries to foster macroeconomic stability and reduce poverty. Since 2013 their main focus has been to reduce poverty by lending money to developing projects, providing financial supports to governments and the private sector and guarantees for large scale developments (Bretton Woods Project 2019:2). The IMF and the World Bank prides themselves in “promoting international fiscal and monetary cooperation, securing international financial stability, facilitating international trade, and promoting high employment and sustainable economic growth” (Bretton Woods Project 2019:2) This is primarily achieved through loans, by facilitating programs, policies and advice to states or countries experiencing financial struggles (Bretton Woods Project 2019:3).

In order to receive loans from the fund or bank the borrowing country need to adhere to certain rules. With the loan comes requirements of economic policy reforms that characterize a neo-liberal macroeconomy. The borrowing country need to prove that they can and will work towards implementing these macroeconomic policy reforms in order to receive the loans (Bretton Woods Project 2019:4). As I will touch on later in my thesis, some argue that the loans themselves are from the beginning designed to put these countries in a situation of dependency, making it easier to exploit their resources.

Although other member countries also have vote shares the US holds veto power in decision making in the IMF. The vote shares are distributed based on the size and openness of the countries' economies and are therefore, according to the Bretton Woods Project, unevenly distributed and furthers an underrepresentation of the economically poorer member countries that also tends to be those that receive loans (Bretton Woods Project 2019:3-4).

Through pushing a certain macroeconomic belief and policy to their member countries the IMF and the World Bank can gain control over their economy and the direction it develops in. In other words, the IMF and the World Bank are the security guard that is supposed to control and regulate neoliberal economics but are at the same time the ones that enables it to expand and gain power.

The IMF and the World Bank states that they aim to lower poverty and maintain global economic health in a sort of win-win situation. Other people however, critic this and argue that there has always been a trade-off between economic growth and human and natural rights in their projects (Bretton woods Project 2019:7) Violations of human rights have been detected in many of the projects endorsed by the IMF and World Bank. They have also been connected to violations of indigenous rights, expansion of food insecurity, targeting of human rights defenders, mass evictions and violation of labour rights and safety. Child and forced labour have repeatedly been found to be used in projects backed by the IMF and the world bank (Bretton woods project 2019:7)

The IMF and the World Bank may seem irrelevant to my thesis since I first and foremost aim to investigate corporations. But in order to further understand corporations we need to understand the structures in which they operate. The IMF and the World Bank are an important part of the wheel that allows corporations to function in the way they currently are. These institutions help to foster and expand the economic structure corporations need to survive and expand in their current form.

3.2.2 The World Trade Organisation

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is a platform for trade negotiations between member countries. The WTO developed in 1995 as a replacement to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) that have worked for similar goal in similar ways since 1948. (WTO.org 2019). The main function of the WTO is to ensure smooth and freely running trade transactions for global trade. WTO is the only international organization dealing with trade on a global scale (WTO 2019). WTO is, in similarity to the IMF and the world bank, supposed to guard and control its subject on interest, in this case; trade. The WTO is supposed to make sure that trade is efficient and just, a complicated task since what is considered efficient and just may differ between different government, countries and markets. A common criticism of the WTO is that they are not as neutral and democratic as they make claim to be. Some criticise the WTO for operating in a way particularly beneficial for the global north and multinational corporations by enforcing rights and laws that enables rich governments that are influenced by corporate lobbyist to have their way on the global trade market (World Development Movement 1999). This is of course something the WTO strongly oppose as they claim to be nothing but the product of all their member countries interests. Regardless of whether the WTO has a corporate agenda or not it is hard to dismiss the fact that free trade is maintained and expanded on the platform the WTO has created. Without the WTO we would not have an as globalised and “free” market as we now have. Admittedly some see this as a victory but on the contrary, some regards free trade and the free global market as the unfortunate circumstance where predatory capitalism can and have flourished and the very reason for the unequal market exchange that increases the wealth gap (World Development Movement 1999)

The World Development Movement argues that the economic growth and increase in GDP that followed the liberalisation of the market has not benefitted all, as it promised, but instead failed poor countries in favour of the rich (World Development Movement 1999). Free trade

claims to level out the playing field but does not address the unequal abilities of the playing countries (New Development Movement 1999). The WTO claims that an open market benefits everybody involved and is a way for economically depressed countries to lift themselves out of poverty. But simply lifting trade barriers and ensuring smooth transactions does not give countries the same possibilities on the global market. Due to colonial history the former (and currently) colonized countries does not start on the same starting line as the countries that colonized them. When free trade laws are implemented on the uneven playing field that characterize our global market this, to the contrary, enables economically richer countries to exploit natural and human resources in the economically poorer countries. It is hard to deny that multinational corporations are widely benefitting from WTOs trade laws whether that was the plan or not. Free trade laws enables multi-national corporations to access markets that they have purposely been excluded from, as was the case of Monsanto's access to the Indian seed market that I will discuss in detail in the section "Monsanto in the global south".

Following the implementation of free trade laws protected by the WTO we have seen a rise in sweatshops and other inhuman working conditions and a catastrophic raise in environmental degradation (World Development Movement 1999), the debate however seems to be whether the rise in economic growth and GDP was worth it or not.

3.3 Agriculture and the Agro-industrial complex

Since humans progressed from a hunter and gather lifestyle agriculture has been a fundamental part of human existence. Through agriculture humans could protect and ensure a source of food even when staying in one location which enabled settlements and an expansion of human population. Agriculture today looks very different from the small-scale biodiverse farming that once replaced hunting and gathering societies. Philip McMichael, a professor in development sociology, uses the term "Food Regime" when he explains agriculture's intrinsic role in today's socio-economical society (McMichael 2009). McMichael argues that through looking at the development of agriculture we can learn a lot about the way in which societies and power structures have developed. In fact, McMichael claims that it is not possible to separate socio-economical structures and agriculture at all (McMichael 2009). Farming was prior to globalization conducted in a small-scale localized way with the main goal of feeding the people in direct proximity. As Europe expanded its colonial empire and forced a structural and societal change in its colonises agriculture went through a transformation as-well. Colonization made it possible for hegemonic countries to outsource food production which forced a shift in agriculture in the colonized countries. Agriculture in the global south that before colonization produced food for the local population was now being transformed into mainly producing cash-crops for the European market (McMichael 2009). In order to meet the demands on the European market agriculture had to be intensified through monocultures and technological advancements. This resulted in the export-based monocultural agriculture we still see in the global south today (McMichael 2009).

Today in “post-colonial” times transnational corporations have stepped in where colonial countries left off and are maintaining the export-based, intensive, monocultural-agriculture that is needed to meet the demands of the global north’s markets (McMichael 2009). Food security is thus not in the hands of local nation-states but in the hands of transnational corporations whose main interest is making money. The implications of this will be discussed at length later in my thesis.

This transformation of global agriculture was accelerated by what is called the green revolution. During the green revolution technology, chemicals and GMOs were introduced to further the expansion of intensive agriculture with the main goal of producing more food and revenue (Bitter seeds 2011). In this way agriculture was increasingly separated from its original purpose; to feed people, and progressively transformed to a business with the main purpose of creating revenue (McMichael 2009). This gave birth to what McMichael calls the Agro-industrial complex where, today, a few transnational corporations control most of the world’s food production. The agro-industrial complex promotes the intensive monocultural type of farming where pesticides, herbicides and GMO are an inherent part. As I will go into in more detail later, this further enables the control transnational corporations have gained and maintained over farmers and the agriculture system in its entirety.

The intensifying of agriculture has, according to many experts such as Vandana Shiva, happened at the expense of the environment (Shiva 2016), but on the contrary some argue that the increase in food production saved this world from a global famine as the population has grown exponentially (McMichael 2009). This is the light that organisations such as the WTO has chosen to present the current agricultural model in; as a necessity for human survival rather than as a multibillion-dollar business for transnational corporations.

The WTO is inherent part of the agro-industrial complex as it enables the economic structures and trade laws needed to turn the natural and human resources of the global south into revenue producing property of transnational corporations (McMichael 2009)

3.4 Monsanto the Company – From chemicals to agriculture

Before Monsanto became an agriculture and biotechnology company, they were a leading chemical company that produced and sold chemicals such as DDT, PCB and Agent Orange (Robin 2008:25-28). As of 2002 though Monsanto has been solely focused on agriculture related products such as GMO seeds, herbicides and pesticides and are today one of the worlds biggest agriculture and biotechnological companies. (Monsanto.com 2019)

As a biotechnological company Monsanto has been leading the way for GMO development and production but also produces herbicides and pesticides that their GMO seed is artificially adapted to withstand. Monsanto has successfully taken over and dominated market by market since their entrance to the agricultural world. 80 % of US corn and 90 % of US soybean production is cultivated with Monsanto's patented GMO seeds and sprayed with Monsanto produced chemicals (Mitchell 2014).

Monsanto was founded as early as 1901 in St. Louis, USA where the company's headquarters are still located. The company as we know it today came into being around 2000 when "Monsanto company", a then affiliated company to Pharmacia, was devested and started to function on its own. In 2005 Monsanto bought the company Seminis Inc and became the largest seed corporation in the world (Monsanto.com 2019). In 2017 Monsanto's net sale was 14,6 billion US dollars and they employed about 20,500 people around the world (Statista 2018). In 2018 Bayer bought Monsanto for a record breaking 66 billion US dollars (Statista 2018) Monsanto already dominated a big majority of the global herbicide and seed markets, but the Bayer-Monsanto conjunction gave Bayer ownership of 34 % of the global herbicide market, the largest share in the industry.

As I will discuss later in my thesis a company this big is influential beyond its own sector and industry and can influence politics and laws related to their own interests. In 2017 Monsanto spend 134,43 million dollars in lobbying expenses in the US alone (Statista 2018).

4 Monsanto vs the World

On Monsanto's webpage they describe themselves as follows: "We a global modern agriculture company. We develop products and tools to help farmers around the world grow crops while using energy, water, and land more efficiently. We believe innovation has the potential to bring humanity's needs in balance with the resources of our planet". (Monsanto.com 2019)

It is not my place to argue whether these goals are genuine or not, but there are important contradictions between these words and what has played out in the real world, as a result of Monsanto's actions, that needs to be discussed. There are many examples where the natural world, the people living in it and Monsanto has not seen eye to eye. Below follow some examples where Monsanto has failed in their goal to create innovations that can "bring humanity's needs in balance with the resources of our planet". I use these examples as my empirical material to build my case of how Monsanto as a corporate power operates in different parts of the world. I use five examples of Monsanto's relations to local communities and ecosystems to understand the manner in which Monsanto affects humans and the environments. These are then analysed using post-colonial theory as described in my theoretical framework.

4.1 Monsanto in the global south – Indian seeds of suicide

"They lied to us "

These are the words an Indian farmer in the documentary Bitter Seeds uses as he tries to explain, and perhaps understand, the dire situation he is finding himself in. The Monsanto produced GMO seed "BT Cotton" has failed to produce a higher yield as it promised and as a result this Indian farmer is drowning in debt he cannot possibly pay back.

The Indian seed market was slowly but surely entered and dominated by Monsanto and other transnational corporations. I say slowly because India did pose significant resistance against Monsanto's intensive monocultural agriculture model and GMO seeds that somewhat slowed down the process (Bitter Seeds 2011). India had successfully banned GMO seeds from their markets in an attempt to protect biodiversity within the country. But following a complaint from the US to the WTO where they claim that this was against free trade agreements, India was forced to open its market to foreign seed companies (Bitter seeds, 2011). It should be mentioned that Monsanto was on the board that drafted the India - US agreements and it would not be an overstatement to suggest that this was influential in allowing the policies concerning GMOs to eventually be as unrestricted as they were. According to Vandana Shiva, environmental activist and founder of Navdanya, the considerable lobbying that was conducted by Monsanto in India also help along the way towards policy's favourable for Monsanto (Robin 2008:296). The effects of Monsanto entering the Indian seed market has been extensive. Today 90 % of Indian farmers cultivate Monsanto's GMO seed such as BT Cotton (Shiva 2016).

India is a land of many small farmers, where most farms measure up to 2-5 acres and has historically cultivated local crops that are well adapted to the monsoon climate of India (Robin 2008:306). In later years as a result of corporate pressure farmers of India have turned to growing cash-crops for foreign markets to an increasing extent (Bitter Seeds 2011). When Monsanto entered the Indian market, they did so with a seemingly endless budget for advertisement and PR campaigns. With advertisements that glorified their seeds and promised higher yields, lower needs of pesticides and an overall better life for farmers they managed to persuade farmers to shift to GMO seeds (Robin 2008:290-293). Farmers were already struggling due to over-cultivated and depleted soils that was fighting to keep up with the transformation into cash-crop production and consequently posed as easy “targets” (Pollan 1998). Retailers that was backed by Monsanto went from village to village selling farmers the, later proven, lie that BT Cotton, Monsanto’s own GMO cotton crop, would increase their yields with less work and costs.

There is a telling scene in the documentary *Bitter Seeds* where one of these retailers visits the village Telung Takli where Ram Krishna, one of the farmers portrayed in the documentary, lives. The farmers gather around while the man tells them of all the benefits of BT cotton. He promises higher yields, “built in” protections against bollworms, less need of pesticides and so on. Farmers raise concerns about other pests and BT cottons possibility to survive the unirrigated soils during unpredictable weather. The retailer promises that BT cotton survives on unirrigated lands and that other pests are not a problem and easy manageable with pesticides (also sold by Monsanto). He proceeds to provide the farmers, many of them illiterate, with pamphlets of information and contact numbers to farmers that is said to have successfully grown BT cotton in India. Later in the documentary these numbers are called but only one of five are found to work. The one phone number that works reaches a man that demonstrates an undying faith in the BT seeds, he insists that the BT cotton will grow, even without rain and even in flooding. He continues to ask where the farmer calling is from and promises that “they” will visit his area soon. Leaving the viewer wondering who “they” are and why a, according to the pamphlet, simply farmer would travel around to villages accompanied by “them” (Bitter seeds 2011)

In this way farmers are persuaded to try BT Cotton with the hopes of better yields and brighter futures. They put their trust in the science behind GMO and the fact that BT Cotton has a built in protecting against Bollworms, cottons number one enemy. But things didn’t turn out as merry as Monsanto had promised. As numerous sources, test and studies shows BT Cotton has not increased yields in India (Robin 2008:292). Originally the BT cotton crop was tested on irrigated farms that had more possibilities both physically and economically to water, drain, spray and fertilize the crop. Only then did the yield increase (Robin 2008:290-295). For 70% of India’s farmers who farm using traditional methods and human power BT Cotton was an immense failure (Robin 2008:293, 303) (Bitter Seeds 2011).

So why then did farmers of India continue to buy and cultivate GMO seeds when their ability to thrive on Indian soils was disappointing in the least? They simply answer ... they didn’t have any other choice (Robin 2008:292). As farmers tried BT Cotton, they relied on the old conventional seeds to be there in case BT cotton failed them. The problem was that every farmer and their neighbour acted on the same logic and when BT failed, and farmers wanted to go back to the old seeds they were nowhere to be found (Bitter Seeds 2011). In one season Monsanto took control over the seed market by influencing retailers to only carry their seeds. Monsanto bought 26 % of the largest Indian seed company, Mahyco, and set up a 50-50 joint

venture with Mahyco Monsanto Biotech, their Indian partner and could in that way control what was being and not being sold on the Indian seed market (Robin 2008:291-296)

The design and regulation of GMO seeds breaks many old farming traditions and methods. GMO seeds such as BT Cotton is seen as Monsanto's property and can therefore not be saved by the farmer (Bitter Seeds 2011). Saving seeds is an ancient practise that lays out the foundation blocks of farming. Traditionally farmers have saved seeds from a portion of the harvest in order to cultivate them next year and traded seeds with other farmers in the region. This way farming has been a circular system that every year progresses the seed into adapting to the land and soil on which it grows (Shiva 2016). It enhances food security, helps biodiversity and gives the farmers control over their seeds and their farming (Shiva 2016). When GMO seeds are used the old practice of saving seeds becomes illegal and farmers must purchase seeds every season from the retailer. The price of these supposed wonder-seeds is much higher than the conventional ones but would, if they worked as promised, be worth the higher investment through higher yields and higher incomes at the harvest. But as already stated, they are not working as promised (Bitter seeds 2011).

The starting price of these seeds are usually too high for farmers to afford which pushes them to loan money at the bank. They take these loans with the conviction that they will be able to pay them back after the harvest. But when the crops fail, as they have done, the farmers are left with a crippling debt that they can't possibly pay back (Robin, 2008:291). The heavy weight of the debt, in combination with the dire prospects of the future when no other seeds than GMO is available, pushes many farmers to commit suicide (Shiva 2016) (Bitter seeds 2011). Although suicides amongst cotton growers have occurred in India before Monsanto entered the market they have greatly increased since. They have also been reduced and eliminated in areas where different associations are promoting organic farming with old conventional seeds (Robin 2008:293)

Despite the promises that BT cotton would reduce the overall pesticide spraying on farms, it has to the contrary, increased. This was proven in a study done on Indian farms in 2002 – 2005. The first years showed a decrease in the amount of pesticides used on GMO seeds compared to conventional seeds but as the years went on the roles reversed. This makes BT Cotton more costly for Indian farmers to grow, regarding pesticide expenditure, than the conventional seeds (Robin 2008:303). The reason for the increased use of pesticides was due to the very natural phenomenon of resistance development in insects and weeds that I will go into more in the section "Superpests and Superweeds". The increase in pesticide costs becomes a costly downward spiral both for farmers economically, the environment and the future of the soil. Monsanto has not taken nature into consideration when crafting their agriculture master plan. A quite severe mistake from a company claiming to be creating the future of food, agriculture and the environment.

4.2 Percy Schmeiser and the patent on life

Percy Schmeiser is a Canadian farmer who in 1998 found himself in a rather significant legal altercation with Monsanto. Monsanto sued Schmeiser for patent infringement following a testing where Monsanto's GMO seeds was found on Schmeiser's land. The problem was though that Schmeiser never used Monsanto's seeds, nor any other of their products. Schmeiser was met with an ultimatum: Pay Monsanto back for the seeds they claimed he

had stolen and give up his whole yield to Monsanto or take them to court. He chose the latter (David versus Monsanto 2009). Schmeiser never planted GMO crops and claims that Monsanto's seeds spread to his farm by winds from neighbouring fields. Schmeiser went to court with the argument that since he never planted nor wanted Monsanto's seed it was the corporation that in fact infringed on his property, not the other way around. Schmeiser also tried to sue Monsanto for pollution and battering (Schmeiser 2003, YouTube).

During this time Percy and his family had many disputes with who he calls the "gene-police". The gene-police is Monsanto's own police whose main responsibility is to protect Monsanto's patents and contracts by going around and inspecting farms, both those that have a contract with Monsanto and those that they have reason to believe are growing their seeds illegally (David versus Monsanto 2009). The gene-police paid several visits to Schmeisers farm without his knowledge and conducted testing on his land without his consent. Schmeiser recollects the time as a scary and uncertain time and says that he even started to carry a rifle in his car due to the increasing tension between him and the multinational corporation. His bank accounts were even cancelled following a threat from Monsanto saying that they would withdraw all their accounts with the same bank if they did not close Schmeisers accounts (David versus Monsanto 2009). It is safe to say that Monsanto was not going to let this go easily, but perhaps to their surprise, neither would Schmeiser.

In a public speech some years after the lawsuit Schmeiser holds up two papers to the audience. One of them is a contract from Monsanto that every farmer using their products must sign. The contracts states that the farmer is not allowed to save its seeds, that the farmer must buy all their seeds and chemicals from Monsanto and pay a fee to Monsanto every year upon harvest. The contract further explains that farmers that have grown their seeds must allow the gene-police onto their farm and access to their documents for 3 years after the contract has ended (Schmeiser 2003, YouTube). But perhaps most importantly, the farmer is extremely limited in his or her ability to sue Monsanto should their products fail to deliver what they promised as seen in this contract from Monsanto in figure 1:

Grower accepts the terms of the following NOTICE REQUIREMENT, LIMITED WARRANTY AND DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY AND EXCLUSIVE LIMITED REMEDY by signing this Agreement and/or opening a bag of Seed. If Grower does not agree to be bound by the conditions of purchase or use, Grower agrees to return the unopened bags to Grower's seed dealer.

10. NOTICE REQUIREMENT:
As a condition precedent to Grower or any other person with an interest in Grower's crop asserting any claim, action, or dispute against Monsanto and/or any seller of Seed regarding performance or non-performance of Monsanto Technologies or Seed, Grower must provide Monsanto a written, prompt, and timely notice (regarding performance or non-performance of the Monsanto Technologies) and to the seller of any Seed (regarding performance or non-performance of the Seed) within sufficient time to allow an in-field inspection of the crop(s) about which any controversy, claim, action, or dispute is being asserted. The notice will be timely only if it is delivered 15 days or less after the Grower first observes the issue(s) regarding performance or non-performance of the Monsanto Technology and/or the Seed. The notice shall include a statement setting forth the nature of the claim, name of the Monsanto Technology, and Seed hybrid or variety. Grower must deliver the notice to Grower Licensing, Monsanto, 622 Emerson Road, Suite 150, St. Louis, MO 63141.

11. LIMITED WARRANTY AND DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTIES:
Monsanto warrants that the Monsanto Technologies licensed hereunder will perform as set forth in the TUG when used in accordance with directions. This warranty applies only to Monsanto Technologies contained in planting Seed that has been purchased from Monsanto and seed companies licensed by Monsanto or the seed company's authorized dealers or distributors. EXCEPT FOR THE EXPRESS WARRANTIES IN THE LIMITED WARRANTY SET FORTH ABOVE, MONSANTO MAKES NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, AND DISCLAIMS ALL OTHER WARRANTIES, WHETHER ORAL OR WRITTEN, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED INCLUDING THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS FOR PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

12. GROWER'S EXCLUSIVE LIMITED REMEDY:
THE EXCLUSIVE REMEDY OF THE GROWER AND THE LIMIT OF THE LIABILITY OF MONSANTO OR ANY SELLER FOR ANY AND ALL LOSSES, INJURY OR DAMAGES RESULTING FROM THE USE OR HANDLING OF SEED (INCLUDING CLAIMS BASED IN CONTRACT, NEGLIGENCE, PRODUCT LIABILITY, STRICT LIABILITY, TORT, OR OTHERWISE) SHALL BE THE PRICE PAID BY THE GROWER FOR THE QUANTITY OF THE SEED INVOLVED OR, AT THE ELECTION OF MONSANTO OR THE SEED SELLER, THE REPLACEMENT OF THE SEED. IN NO EVENT SHALL MONSANTO OR ANY SELLER BE LIABLE FOR ANY INCIDENTAL, CONSEQUENTIAL, SPECIAL, OR PUNITIVE DAMAGES.

Thank you for choosing our advanced technologies. We look forward to working with you in the future. If you have any questions regarding the Monsanto Technologies or this license, please call the Monsanto Customer Relations Center at: 1-800-768-6387.

13. PLEASE MAIL THE SIGNED 2011 MONSANTO TECHNOLOGY/STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT TO:
Grower Licensing, Monsanto
622 Emerson Road, Suite 150
St. Louis, MO 63141

Figure 1. Technology / Stewardship agreement between Monsanto and Brian Scott 2016.

The extremely oppressive timeframe of 15 days gives the farmers no chance to sue or start a case before Monsanto can conduct their own testing and can easily debunk any negative claims. This essentially locks farmers into a contract where they cannot sue or hold Monsanto accountable for any losses, damages or injury resulting from the use of their products (Schmeiser 2003, YouTube).

The second document Schmeiser presents is a letter from Monsanto sent out to several farmers which states that Monsanto has reason to believe that the farmer receiving the letter cultivates Monsanto seeds illegally and is therefore encouraged to pay Monsanto the share that they deem appropriate. The letter continues to explain that the farmer is not allowed to show the letter to anyone and if the farmer fails to comply, they will take them to court (Schmeiser 2003, YouTube). Many of these farmers could only dream of being able to pay the legal fees that taking such a big company to court would entail. Schmeiser uses the two documents as an example of how Monsanto, only through selling products to farmers, gain almost complete control over the farmer seeds but also their actions, should they wish to have it. Bizarrely Monsanto also promises a free leather jacket to anyone that calls out their neighbour if they suspect they are using Monsanto seeds illegally. This divide and conquer technique instils fear in the farmers and breaks up the, oftentimes, strong farming communities that could be centuries in the making.

Through oppressive contracts Monsanto has managed to keep complaints at bay and their unjust contracts out of the limelight. The story of Schmeiser however, was the whirlwind that Monsanto wished to avert forever. Schmeiser took Monsanto to court and turned a much-needed light on the questionable laws regarding GMO seeds. The judge ruled in Monsanto's favour and the motivation behind the decision shook the farming world to its core and reviled the seriousness of the citation of GMO seeds and the right that they hold (David versus Monsanto 2009). The judge decided that it does not matter **how** GMO seeds gets onto a farm, if testing shows that it exists, the field and crop is considered Monsanto's property and they own the rights to it. In Schmeiser's case only 4 out of 24 tests showed a significant amount of GMO all of which were collected in the ditches surrounding his farm, the tests done in the field showed only 2-4% of GMO seeds (David versus Monsanto 2009). In this way farmers do not even have to sign the contract to suffer the consequences of it (Schmeiser 2003, YouTube). The consequences of this, besides the economical ones, is that the farmers have to give up their own, now contaminated seeds, and cannot regrow or save seeds that they have spent decades to refine since it is now all considered Monsanto's property and re-growing them would be seen as a breach of a contract they did not sign (David versus Monsanto 2009). It is clear that corporate property rights are priorities, by laws, far ahead of those of farmers.

This is not a discussion of the being or not being of GMO seeds themselves. Even a pro-GMO farmer could recognize the unjust advantages Monsanto is given as a result of the laws regarding GMO seeds. The legal protections of patented GMO seeds make it hard to see any other outcome than a future domination by patented GMO seeds on the seed market. Vandana Shiva argues that this patenting of seeds, owning of life, is a fundamental violation of the laws of nature and is the very reason that the future of agriculture and food has been moved from the hands of the farmer into the hands of corporations (Shiva 2003:7-10).

By claiming that the modified gene in GMO seeds are an invention of the company producing it the same company can also apply for patent of that gene and therefore seed. This is what Monsanto has done with their GMO seeds which gives them exclusive right to the

intellectual property of the seed and the plants it produces. By owning the seeds, they gain legal rights to all plants and crops grown with the seed and therefore control all usage of their seeds. (Shiva 2003:85). Patents is not limited to machines or biological organisms but has also been used to patent indigenous knowledge such as in the case of neem in India. The pest repellent properties of neem is ancient cultural knowledge, not an invention of foreign scientists, but nevertheless, foreign companies have successfully patented the active property in neem and therefor owns the right to it (Shiva 2003:13-14) Patent laws and intellectual property rights have been widely discussed by scientists, farmers and environmental activist alike. Many who oppose patent laws argue that natures value cannot be translated into monetary value and should be protected not only when it becomes someone's property but because it is an invaluable part of our future. Further they argue that intellectual property rights do not protect indigenous knowledge as it claims to do, in fact most of patent applications is done by western companies (Shiva 2003:10-15). Shiva argues that allowing patents on lifeforms are the ultimate objectification of nature and will have grave consequences on our collective future. I will go more into depths about the consequences of patents of life in the discussion section.

4.3 Argentina and the invasion of Roundup-Ready soybeans

Monsanto's Roundup Ready-Soybean seeds (RR soybean) entered the Argentinian seed market in 1996 and did so very effortlessly. There was no public or parliament debate and civil society was kept out of the decision-making processes (Robin 2008:256-259). Despite the rather severe consequences the country has faced since the implementation of RR Soybeans, Argentina has almost always been a supporter and user of biotechnical methods and inventions (Robin 2008:256-259). In contrast to India Argentina's agricultural sector open their arms and markets widely for Monsanto and RR soybeans spread with a record-breaking pace of 2 million acres per year in the first years after introduction (Robin 2008:257). Intensive Agriculture was nothing foreign to Argentina even before Monsanto's seeds hit the market. The extensive production of crops such as corn, wheat, sunflowers and lentils gave Argentina the nickname "the worlds breadbasket". Argentina produced food for over ten times their population in pre-RR soybeans times, so evidently, it was not a lack of food that caused Argentina to welcome the transgenic seeds with open arms, it was the lack of healthy soil (Robin 2008:257-262). As a result of Argentina's already intensive agriculture model soil erosion and exhaustion of the soil started to take out its toll in 1990. Yields started to diminish and crop managing became increasingly labour intensive (Robin 2008:259-260). When Monsanto, backed by the Aapresid (the Argentine Association of No-Till farmers that grouped together hundreds of farmers and producers), introduced their "technological packaged" of RR-Soybeans accompanied by Roundup, the herbicide it was tolerant to. The Argentinian agricultural sector was in a desperate enough place to happily welcome it.

In the first years RR Soybeans spread like wildfire throughout the country and did exactly what it promised; it increased yields and lower the labour input needed. The economic crisis that Argentina suffered at the time helped RR soybeans gain an almost saint like status in the country since it became the most secure source of income for both individuals and the country in its whole (Robin 2008:259-264). The mad cow disease that at the same time wreaked havoc around the globe increase the demand, and price, for plant protein such as soy which furthered enhanced RR soybeans status in Argentina (Robin 2008:261)

Soybean farming became incredibly rewarding and as a result the price of arable land skyrocketed. Even though farmers income did increase many small farmers went out of business when big wealthy foreign agribusinesses bought up the land and accelerated the expansion of a monoculture agriculture model with the help of RR soybeans. Argentina's agriculture model was unsustainable even before RR soybeans was introduced, but the take-over by one crop (RR soybeans) and foreign agribusinesses resulted in a transformation of the focus of Argentina's agriculture from growing food and creating a livelihood for farmers to producing export cash-crops for the European market. Argentina went from a, mainly local, breadbasket for humans to becoming the main producer of European livestock feed (Robin 2008:265-270).

Since RR soybeans now occupied most of the arable land Argentina was forced to import food for their population which increased the price of everyday goods making an already financially struggling population even more vulnerable (Robin 2008:260-261). The government tried hard through various advertisements to promote soybeans as the new food of Argentina. Through marketing campaigns they called for soymilk and soy-based proteins to take a bigger place on the plates of the otherwise milk and beef heavy cuisine in an attempt to better soy's representation in order to become less dependent on import goods (Robin 2008:263-265). This could be regarded as a form of colonisation where the public is persuaded to do cultural changes that would be beneficial for the hegemonic power. It also illustrates how discourse can be shaped both by corporations and state leadership.

At first RR soybeans did what they promised and produced more with less input, but as the years went on the promises from Monsanto began to fall through as RR soybeans become less and less beneficial to grow. One of the reasons why RR soybeans became so successful in Argentina was thanks to its Roundup tolerance. Farmers could spray the crops with roundup that very effectively killed everything it touched except the RR-soybean making it easy to keep weeds at bay. Initially this meant less spraying than the old crops but due to the natural phenomena of resistance development the need of herbicides steadily increases. When weeds are sprayed frequently with herbicides, they will develop a resistance and will be able to survive spraying in the future. This is what happened in Argentina and as a result the used glyphosate (the active ingredient in Roundup) increased from 1 million litres before RR soybeans entered the market to 150 million litres in 2005 (Robin 2008:264). The promises of higher yields and reductions in herbicide that gave Monsanto a warm welcome in Argentina is to an increasing extent being exposed as the lie many Argentinian agricultural experts claims it to be (Robin 2008:264,272). The immense upsurge in the use of roundup has had consequences both on the soil and human health. Roundup kills not only weeds but also important soil bacteria needed to maintain healthy and arable lands for the future and as a result Argentinian lands are becoming progressively sterile. Roundup also pollutes water sources and is spread by the winds to nearby villages and farms. It should be noted that Monsanto themselves claims that Roundup is very safe to use and has, at time, even labelled it as biodegradable (Robin 2008:266).

Argentina has had some quite severe spraying related incidents where people living near heavily sprayed areas has suffered extreme headaches, joint pains, nausea, and skin and eye problems. At one incident an entire school started to vomit the same day the nearby fields were sprayed (Robin 2008:266-268). An alarming increase in glyphosate related diseases such as reproductive abnormalities, thyroid problems, respiratory problems, kidney and liver problems and skin and eye problems was also observed by medical doctors in the country

(Robin 2008:266) Experts are quick to denounce events like this and often blame viruses or, as in the case of Felicpe Franco, poor hygiene. Franco is an Argentinian small-scale farmer who suffered great losses when Roundup spread with particularly unfortunate wind to his family farm. His family suffered nausea and headaches and many of his ducks, geese and even horses died. Some of his sows aborted and some later gave birth to deformed piglets. When he sought redemption and tried to sue, experts who came to assess the situation quickly blamed poor hygiene and put an end to the conversation. Franco was advised to move which makes it hard to come to any other conclusions than that soybeans are prioritised above the lives of farmers (Robin 2008:268) According to Pedro Colonel, a forest engineer, the soy-lobby and big agribusinesses is too intertwined with the government and too powerful for anyone to really oppose them. Even a representant from the ministry of environmental and sustainable development calls for an increase in regulations to transgenic seeds but when being asked if such regulations is not precisely his job to implement, he admits that he has very little say in the matter (Robin 2008:268-271).

RR soybeans expansion throughout Argentina created many losers and few winners, one thing that is crystal clear though is that even though soils are eroding, and the future of Argentinian arable soils are looking dire, Monsanto is still the biggest winner of them all. When a company that claims to create a sustainable agriculture is still financially benefitting when the opposite happens, alarm clocks should go off.

In Argentina RR soybeans did exactly what they were designed to do. They increased yields and decreased input. The soybean production that rose as a result, in many ways, saved Argentina in a financial crisis. And even though RR soybeans “worked”, the long-term repercussions on farmers and agriculture in Argentina have been very negative and severe (Robin 2008:260-265).

Héctor Barchetta, an Argentinian farmer, was quoted in Robins book *The World According to Monsanto* saying “Before, I produced fifteen different food crops; now I only do transgenic soybeans. Maybe we’ve fallen into a trap. Maybe we are in the process of sacrificing the Earth and our Children’s future” (Robin 2008:265).

Biotechnological Companies as Monsanto claim to expand the frontier of agriculture to better the future of food (Robin 2008:272), but when considering what happened in Argentina’s, one can wonder if biotechnological solutions are too far separated from the laws of nature to ever truly work in the long run.

This example from Argentina shows that even when the seed performs as promised for food production the consequences for nature are still negative and the company continues to flourish without having to internalise any of the ecological costs that the environment is made to carry.

4.4 The story of Anniston

Before 2002 Monsanto produced chemicals, such as PCB, in addition to their agricultural sector. One of their PCB industries was located in the outskirts of the city Anniston in Alabama, USA where they produced PCB from 1935 until 1971 and emitted 60.000 pounds into the atmosphere, dumped 1,8 million pounds into Snow Creek, the local water stream, and 68 million pounds of contaminated water were dumped into a pit in the suburbia's centre (Robin 2008:12-13). Monsanto left Anniston in 1971 but consequences of their industry such as biological dead zones, permanently contaminated waters and an alarming rise in deaths, miscarriage, PCB related diseases and cancer; especially amongst the young are still lingering on many decades after (Robin 2008:9-12). The story of Anniston however differs from many of the other altercations Monsanto has been involved in. When the local population sued Monsanto for the ramifications of their PCB factory, they won. (Robin 2008:10). Although the effects on life in Anniston from the PCB production industry was extremely severe and easily proven it was not this that eventually convinced the court to rule in their favour.

It was when local lawyer Donald Stevens got access to approximately 500,000 pages of inside documents that Monsanto had tried to hide but now had to make public that Monsanto had to declare defeat. These documents proved that Monsanto had known the dangers of PCB as early as 1937 but withheld the truth due to their own economic interest (Robin 2008:14-16). Monsanto had previously said that they found out about the dangers of PCB in 1960 and immediately acted appropriately (Robin 2008:26). These, now public, documents proved otherwise, and Monsanto had to pay 700 million dollars to the inhabitants of Anniston. Although this, at the time, was the largest known settlement involving an industrial company it raises the question: How do you really put a price on a stolen future, on contaminated water, deaths and chronic diseases?

This illustrates the extreme power that a multi-national corporation can have where its misdeed in one setting do not prevent its continued operation in another local setting.

4.5 Superweeds and Superpests

When Monsanto produce their seeds the goal is to, in their own words, “bring *humanity's needs in balance with the resources of our planet* “. However, as we have seen, the results of their actions and products does not always coincide with that goal. Monsanto's BT Cotton is modified to produce its own toxin against the bollworm and Roundup ready soy is modified to withstand frequent sprays of roundup. As shown, this has created a growing resistance in insects and weeds and a creation of what Vandana Shiva calls superweeds and superpests (Shiva 2019). This can be compared with the growing antibiotic resistance bacteria we see as a result of an overuse of antibiotics in animal agriculture. They are both very hard to undo. As superweeds and superpests develop the input of pesticides and herbicides needed increase and with-it labour input needs to increase as well. It goes without saying that this is changing the lives, and sometimes outright ends the lives, of many farmers around the world (Robin 2008:305-306).

It can seem odd that a scientific based corporation dedicated to produce seeds for the future has seemingly looks past such a fundamental and natural occurrence as resistance developing. This to me is a prime example of where Monsanto places nature on the scale of importance; at the very bottom. Monsanto's seeds are not made to work with nature, they are made to create revenue and secure a profitable economical future for Monsanto. The concern that insects would develop resistance to GMO crops was raised as early as the mid 1990's. In an attempted to combat the issue Monsanto advices their farmers to accompany the GMO crops with so called refugee-crops. Refugee-crops are a non-GMO crop where non-resistant insects can proliferate and then mate with the resistant insects in order to avoid that the resistant insect propagated with each other and thus create a resistant super insect (Robin 2008:303). What percentage of the overall land that would have to be set aside for refugee-crops was widely debated between Monsanto and scientist. The number scientist suggested was too high according to Monsanto and the number Monsanto wanted was too low to have an effect according to scientist. The number eventually agreed upon was 20 % of the GMO crops surface (Robin 2008:305). It is also worth mentioning that the probability that this strategy would be successful was dire even from the beginning. It takes a lot of effort and knowledge from the farmers to be successful with refugee-crops and considering that most small farmers are only cultivating 2-5 acers it is not sustainable for them to give up 20 % of that land to grow only refugee plants (Robin 2008:306). Regardless we can now, almost 2 decades later say, with quite clear certainty, that whatever measures Monsanto took to avoid the development of resistance, was too little. Farmers and the environment are already experiencing grave effects as a result of these superweeds and superpests that are now a real issue in modern agriculture (Shiva 2016).

When reading Michael Pollan's interview with Monsanto representative Jerry Hjellev in 1998, one can wonder how sincere the efforts taken against resistance really was. Pollan confronts Hjellev about the problem with resistant development to which he gets the response; "If all goes well resistance can be postponed for 30 years" (Pollan 1998). Today, about 20 years later, that answer might not be as reassuring. Pollan persisted for a more elaborate answers as to what would happen after the said 30 years to which Hjellev answered that the problem would then be handled with the help of new GMO crops that insect hadn't yet developed resistance against. "*Trust us*", he said. (Robin 2008:305).

The idea that new agricultural innovations will fix what old innovations caused does not only make the agricultural future completely dependent on corporations like Monsanto but it also pushes the laws of nature to the side and lets technology, that is admittedly flawed, dictate the direction of the agricultural future. Hjellev admits that resistance developing is unavoidable but still argues for a continuation of the technologies that created it (Pollan 1998). Not only have Monsanto created a biological crisis as superpests and superweeds are increasing chemical use in agriculture and are poses a very real treat against a future sustainable agriculture, but they have also found a way of profiting on the same crises.

With Monsanto's logic the future of agriculture can omit nature altogether by bypassing fundamental natural laws. Monsanto is erasing nature to leave room for their own economic security and expansion. Nature is controlled both in current time and in the future. This is one of the reasons why I argue that Monsanto has turned nature into a commodity, life into a property and nature into a subaltern.

5 Discussion

5.1 Institutional control and systemic domination

The market based economic model is often portrayed as the benchmark of how economies and businesses should be run. It is often this model that is put on a pedestal for other countries to strive towards as the successes of America is often contributed to this model. Institutions such as the world bank and the IMF are key elements in extending this model to other countries throughout the globe. They do so by aiding economically struggling countries with loans that are earmarked for specific projects that is said to improve living standards. These loans however come with certain requirements that are designed to reform the economic system of that country towards a neo-liberal one (Perkins 2004:10). These institutions often pride themselves in bettering the livelihood and conditions in the loan receiving countries, but many experts oppose this philanthropical framing of the operations of institutions and argues that the main beneficiaries are the institutions themselves along with the US corporations that conduct the projects. One if these experts that have spoken out about the repercussions of pushing these economic reforms onto countries in the global south are John Perkins. Perkins was once a chief economist at a consultant agency that worked closely with the IMF and the World Bank. Perkins job was to economically asses, on behalf of the loan provider, the possible effects of a loan and project to determine whether it was economically justified and would bring about economic growth to the country. If Perkins gave the green light, a loan would be made from the IMF or World bank to the country in question (Perkins 2004:15). Perkins was in other words an essential part of getting loans approved and organized. Admittedly, this does not sound so bad, but as Perkins explain throughout his book *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man*, this official description of his job title did not coincide very well with reality. Perkins position enabled him to pick and choose which loans and projects would and would not be approved through altering his research results. In that way he could tailor the outcome to benefit certain economies and political views. And that was, as Perkins explains, exactly what was expected of him. Perkins himself explains his job title as this:

“[...] [T]here were two primary objectives of my work. First, I was to justify huge international loans that would funnel money back to [U.S. corporations] through massive engineering and construction projects. Second, I would work to bankrupt the countries that received those loans (after they had paid the [U.S. corporations], of course.) so that they would be forever beholden to their creditors, and so that they would present easy targets when we needed favours, including military bases, UN votes, or access to oil and other natural resources” (Perkins 2004:15)

In other words; Perkins job was to go to a country that had valuable resources or other strategic benefits and persuade its leaders (whether it was true or not) that the project these institutions wanted to fund would greatly benefit the country. Ones indebted the country was given the “opportunity” to pay back by practically giving away its resources or political support.

Considering that the money from the loans was funnelled straight into the US companies that performed the project very little was left for the actual country. In Perkins own words: “The debt burden deprived [the] poorest citizens of health, education and other social services for decades to come” (Perkins 2004:16). Deciding which countries would be considered for loans deepened very little on the social situation of the country and much more on what resources or political benefits the corporation or the institutions would gain from making that country indebted. If a project would not benefit the corporation or the institutions, they would never receive funding regardless of how beneficial it could be to the country’s population (Perkins 2004:6,16)

GNP was always the standard of measuring the success of a project but as Perkins admits even him and his colleagues knew; a rise in GNP does not indicate a rise in living standard but could to the contrary mean the opposite (Perkins 2004:15). This was often the case as many of the countries that received loans from these institutions has not seen a rise in wellbeing but rather a growing income gap, poverty and environmental degradation (Perkins 2019, YouTube). The GNP indicator was nevertheless the perfect justification for the actions of the institutions and US corporations. By pointing to the rising GNP, they could successfully divert the public attention from their colonial operations and mask their actions as a philanthropical civilizing mission.

Perkins goes on to explain that in some cases the country in question did not want to comply with the proposals of US institutions and rejected the loans. In such cases, brute force or treats was used to get the will of US interests through. Iran and the dethronement of Mossadegh is on example (Perkins 2004:108).

Perkins refers to this type of capitalism as “predatory capitalism”, a violent form of capitalism that creates oligarchies where few very powerful people, institutions and corporations thrive while others suffer (Perkins 2004:221-225). He claims that a true form of capitalism would not produce similar problems, but I argue that the whole model of capitalism is flawed. Capitalism could only be sustainable and just if we could trust people to do what is right for the common good. But since capitalism rewards greed and offers no sort of regulatory actions against greed-full actions, I fail to see how a system that stand on those ground cannot be or become predatory.

Our economic system glorifies, maybe even fetichises, growth and all that brings about that growth (Perkins 2004:7). This makes it easy to look the other way when economic growth is directly derived from highly unsustainable or unethical means of action. As Perkins states in an interview on the YouTube channel The Young Turks; “Predatory capitalism is not a model since the overexploitation inherent in it would make it impossible for it to be implemented on a global scale” (Perkins 2019). To me, this means that the economic institutions that are promoting and maintaining the, in Perkins words, model of predatory capitalism, are not doing so with a philanthropical goal in mind but are instead promoting this model because it enhances the global souths dependence on the global north which is needed if this economical model is to continue to thrive.

In this way economical institutions plays an essential role in maintaining the structures needed to exploit the global souths human and natural resources and are therefore enabling the subalternation of Nature.

5.2 The immortality of Monsanto

Monsanto claims to be concerned with the balance between human needs and nature's limitations. Through their technology and products, they aim to “*bring humanity's needs in balance with the resources of our planet*” (Monsanto.com 2019). As I have argued in this thesis however, that is not always the result of their actions. Monsanto has successfully created an agricultural structure where they walk out as winners in almost every scenario.

When the technology works, as in Argentina, their seeds and coupled herb- and pesticide becomes widespread and dominates the market but degrades the soil. When the technology doesn't work, as in India, where it even caused suicides, they still dominate the market through successful lobbying and by buying big enough shares of seed companies to control the seed range on the market. When their seeds create a natural crisis in the form of superweeds and superpests they can still economically benefit from the increased need of herb- and pesticide as they are the ones selling that too. When they are stopped by law from entering a market, as in India, they use their lobbying influence and gets the WTO to open doors for them. When farmers are using their seeds, they collect royalties and revenue through the annual purchase farmers using their seeds must make. When farmers are not using their seeds, as in the case of Percy Schmeiser, they can still sue for patent infringement if their seeds can be found on someone farm, regardless of how it got there. When they are found guilty for causing chronic damage to humans and environments, as in the case of Anniston, they can pay a monetary fee that is a fraction of their revenue and continue to thrive.

If Monsanto was an individual person my guess is that they would be locked up for good, but since they are not, although they do enjoy the legal benefit of one, they cannot go to jail and are not only free to continue but also allowed to maintain very influential in deciding how future agriculture will be developed.

I see this as some sort of growth-fetish where we, in our modern global world, are happy to look the other way regarding the repercussions of corporate actions as long as they bring about economic growth. Monsanto was found guilty for causing unrepairable damages to the community of Anniston so severe that it will likely cause deaths, diseases and a harmful environment for many generations to come. In addition, they were proven guilty of withholding crucial information about the dangers of their product and production, but they are still one of the biggest, most influential companies in the agricultural sector. If that is not proof of a lack of corporate regulation in today's economical structure, I don't know what is.

The IMF, World Bank and the WTO are all working towards maintaining the economic structure that enables companies like Monsanto to operate so unrestricted. Monsanto is after all increasing GDP and enhancing the global market trade, something these institutions consider a crucial part of our common development and wellbeing. I argue that the successes of Monsanto would not be possible without the protection provided by being backed by hegemonic economic structures and institutions. This answers my second research question and explains the important role economic institutions play in enabling corporations to

continue unaffected in their actions that, as I will go into in the next section, turns nature into a subaltern.

There are a lot of similarities between the conducts of Monsanto and the conducts of colonial powers. Like Monsanto the colonial empire was not built on the back of one person and there was not one person that could be held accountable for the actions they performed, nor one person that could be defeated. Through decentralising power and playing on the side of the hegemonic powers (in colonial times: the western countries and logic, and for Monsanto: the growth-based economic structure) they could both expand at the expense of others. Like colonial powers justified the violence inherent in their expansion as a necessary evil for their much-needed civilizing missions, Monsanto mask their endeavours, with the help of institutions, as beneficial for all because of the monetary accumulation it enables and the technologies it produces.

I would like to make the case that we not only have to contemplate the power we facilitate when we allow immortal corporations to continue despite criminal activities, but we also need to take a good critical look at the system that has enabled them to develop from a governmental tool to power structures of their own.

5.3 Nature as a Subaltern

Spivak famously argues that the subaltern cannot speak. But it is not the physical voice of the subaltern that is lacking but the recognition of that voice. In the case of nature however, there is no physical voice to begin with. For some this would perhaps mean that nature could not be considered a subaltern since nature couldn't create discourse, even if it wanted and was allowed to. I however question that as I recognise Spivak's words to mean that it does not matter what language or ways of communicating the subaltern chooses since it is not the actions of the subaltern that puts them in the subaltern position but the oppression from the hegemonic group. Therefore, it does not matter in what language the subaltern is speaking, or **if** they are speaking at all, they are still being put into the subaltern position were their experiences, knowledge and interests are ignored to leave room for the hegemonic group's. Therefore, I argue that the concept of the subaltern can be used also for understanding nature's role in our global society and that nature is a subaltern in the way it is treated under a capitalistic logic.

It is important however to mention that how nature is viewed and treated differs depending on different cultural structures. In some cultures, nature is valued and recognised for its importance for our survival and would therefore not be understood as a subaltern. When I speak about nature as a subaltern I do so in reference to the neo-liberal macro-economic structure and the general culture that often accompanies it, and especially in reference to corporate logic and actions.

Before I go on it is important to point out that in using post-colonial framework and concepts to understand nature, I do not wish to undermine the importance these concepts have played in the emancipation of the subaltern human. I'm not looking to make oppression parallels between the sufferings of humans and that of nature. And I do believe that the isolation of these concepts on the human issue has been (and still are) very important in understanding the oppressions of the human subaltern (Frenning 2018). I simply wish to explore whether

these concepts can help in conceptualizing and understanding the oppression of nature in the same way they helped in understand human oppression.

I'm not saying that nature suffers in the same ways as humans when it is locked into a subaltern state. But there is an important correlation between the two oppressions that should not be overlooked. When we place nature in the subaltern state and push it to the side in order to make room for what we deem more important (economic growth), as we have seen Monsanto do time and time again, we are using the same colonial structures and logics that placed some humans above others. This silences the voices of those placed on the bottom and justifies the violence that where (and are) afflicted upon them as a result of being placed in the category of "less-than".

The hierarchal scale of which we measure life against is as much prevalent today as in colonial times. In colonial times it was the white European male that was being put on the top of this scale as the benchmark "human" and the Subaltern human and the non-human animal at the bottom. They were posed as moral opposites and between them every human in descending "humanness" could be found. The more you resembled the norm (the white European male) both by looks and culture, the more value you were ascribed and the more you differed from it, the more your suffering could be ignored. Comparing some humans to animals has been a prevalent part of the oppression and subalternation of some humans as the violence afflicted on them could then be justified by claiming that they were "just an animal". This creates a category of beings that we place outside of our moral universe and in that way we green-light violence towards them. Post-colonial theory has worked to lift the subaltern human out of the category of less-than and even-though that is extremely important stopping there does not question the existence of such a category in the first place. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that even in colonial times nature was placed very low on the scale of importance but were perhaps not seen as an object of domination as humans were, and nature is now.

To answer my research question, I have replaced the human on top of this hierarchal scale with corporations such as Monsanto and the subaltern human / non-human animal with nature. Again, this is not to make the claim that humans are not still measured and oppressed based on where they place on the hierarchal scale of humanness but instead an attempted to make sense of the placement of nature.

I must also emphasise an important difference in the colonizer – colonized divide and the corporate – nature one. The colonizer – colonized divide is created along racial lines as it measured humans against a "benchmark human" that was placed on top through colonial violence. (Frenning 2018)(Ko, 2017) The divide between corporations and nature is not created along racial lines. The domination and subalternation of nature were created out of a need. For our economy to endlessly grow, as is the goal of capitalism, nature needs to be viewed as a resource for companies, a subaltern, and not as a source for life

The economical interest of Monsanto has, as explored in my many examples, been dependent on a domination and control over nature. The success of the company seems to stand in direct conflict with the health of nature. In order to maintain their business and continue their expansion they need nature to be a subaltern. **Only when nature is placed into the category of "less-than", where violence is okayed, can Monsanto continue their actions without being stopped. Therefore, I argue that corporate action not only turns nature into a subaltern but depends on it in order to function.**

When corporations can sacrifice nature on the alter of economic growth, it sends the message that economic growth is more important than environmental (and human) health. Doing so reinforces the colonial mindset that strengthens the idea of a hierarchal scale, supports the category of “less-than” and enables a continuation of unjust power structures. A World that functions on these grounds can never not be violent.

To support my above argument, I would like to connect back to my examples of patents and the ways Monsanto’s patents and actions are turning nature into a subaltern.

Patenting is an integral part of Monsanto’s work and success and plays a key role in the subalternation of nature. Turning nature into something that can be owned by a corporation is, according to Vandana Shiva, the ultimate objectification of nature (Shiva 2016). Patenting has made it possible for Monsanto to continue their exploitation and control of nature by making it their property. But patenting is a complex issue even beyond its effects on the human-nature relationship. Through patenting corporations can gain power over indigenous knowledge as in the situation of neem’s insects repelling properties. The properties of neem are not a new scientific discovery but an ancient cultural knowledge, despite this and due to patent laws the properties in neem are now object for several patents held by western companies (Shiva 2003:10-15)

This is an example of how, as Foucault and Said argues, knowledge is used as a tool for power. Only when the properties of neem were “discovered” and proven in a western scientific lab where they accepted as real. As Shiva argues, the properties of neem is only new in the ignorant eyes of the west (Shiva 2003:71) but the fact that a western company now holds the patent of them is proof that western science and knowledge is centred as correct and indigenous local knowledge is dismissed. It also, in my opinion supports the belief of Foucault that knowledge is not an objective truth.

In similar ways to how in colonial times the technologies and knowledge of the west was posed as superior, Monsanto’s model of agriculture has been posed as the superior model compared to traditional ways of farming. However, as my many examples has shown the agro-industrial complex’s way of farming, that Monsanto endorse, is not superior if we are concerned with the longevity of our earth. Nevertheless, it is this model that has been spread to every corner of the world and been portrayed as the saving grace of humanity. **I argue that the expansion of the agro-industrial model is not due to a superiority of that model but due to a colonial and violent domination of knowledge by corporations like Monsanto that are backed by the economic hegemonic powers of business as usual.** This domination is made possible by the global economic structure and the economic institutions that sustain that structure through oppressive tactics and economical dependency as explained in the “institutional control and systemic domination” section. The domination of knowledge provides corporations with the power needed to subalternate both nature and the global south.

It is hard to deny the words of Spivak as she claims that “The western intellectual productions collude with western international economic interests” [my translation from Swedish] (Spivak 2014:208)

6 Conclusion

Through the case study of Monsanto, it has become clear to me that the economic interests of corporations and their possibility to create profit is prioritised well above the health and rights of nature. Corporate logics has turned our environments into a property and are trying to put a monetary value on human and natural life because doing so enables them to clean their hands in the sink of neo-liberal economic logic and simply pay off their dues. I argue, however, that money can never restore the true cost of their actions. Nature should not be able to be measured in monetary value, neither should our future be able to be sold to corporations on behalf of their economic interests.

With the help from economic institutions Monsanto has effectively dominated and colonized knowledge and successfully portrayed the agro-industrial model as superior and turned nature and natural properties into objects of property. This has enabled them to protect their economical interest by ensuring an unhindered access to nature. In order to maintain their economic growth Monsanto must therefore turn nature into a subaltern and depends on maintaining it as such. When nature is placed in the category of “less-than”, Monsanto’s actions can be justified.

The postcolonial perspective is of great importance as we try to re-conceptualize around our relationship to nature (Frenning 2018). The importance lies in making the connection that when we place anyone or anything into the category of “less-than”, where violence is okayed, we are reinforcing and normalizing structures that enhance the idea that anyone or anything that differs from the norm or from hegemonic interests, can be placed outside our sphere of ethical consideration. This very logic was what enabled colonial powers to violently erase culture, humans and knowledge to make room for their own impression of the truth. And it is now what enables corporations to dominate knowledge production and put nature into the category of the subaltern and justify their violence towards it.

The recognition of nature as a subaltern is however important beyond understanding the economic structure of this world and corporations. When we place nature into the category of “less-than”, on behalf of corporate interest, we are not only adding to the power of corporations but reinforcing the colonial mindset that created the “less-than” category in the first place. **Nature as a subaltern is not only a corporate necessity but it is also another way in which colonial logic is expressed in our modern times.** The domination of some over others did not end with colonialism but is still prevalent in various forms today. Corporation’s domination over nature is only one way in which these logics are persisting into our present. Acknowledging nature as a subaltern is however, in my opinion, an important part of calling out and questioning colonial power structures altogether. If we tackle the corporate – nature relationship from within a post-colonial framework it becomes clear that colonial structures are still central in how this world is structured. This adds a valuable perspective in understanding the harmful repercussions corporate actions have and will have on our collective future. My hope is that this perspective can help us question the existence of the category of “less-than” altogether and in doing so create bricks for a new conceptual architecture alleviated from colonial structures for the future. (Ko, 2017)

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Figure 1. Technology / Stewardship agreement between Monsanto and Brian Scott. 2016. Published on Farmerslife.com 8th of February 2016.

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