

THE “LOGISTICAL MACHINE” RESHAPING CULTURES AND LANDSCAPES: A POSITION PAPER

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ABSTRACT

This position paper examines the role of the “logistical machine” as a driving force behind the acceleration of global flows and the homogenization of economies and cultures. Far from being merely an optimization tool, the “logistical machine” enables the intensive exploitation of natural resources, the erosion of local knowledge, and the dominance of multinational corporations over territories and ways of life. A critical assessment of global supply chains reveals how they concentrate economic power while dismantling local alternatives. The author advocates for expanding traditional supply chain management paradigms, which are often narrowly focused on performance and profitability while overlooking broader systemic effects. Exploring alternatives such as short supply chains and localized governance models, this position paper opens new pathways for rethinking the “logistical machine” through the lenses of social justice and sustainability.

KEYWORDS

Consumption, Culture, Environment, Global/short supply chains, Governance, Indigenous communities, Knowledge, “Logistical machine,” Performance, Sustainability

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalization, logistical performance has become a key factor in determining corporate competitiveness, influencing inter-organizational dynamics and reshaping value chains, thereby transforming lifestyles in both developed and developing nations. The efficiency of global supply chains, often celebrated for their speed, seamless coordination, and fluid movement of goods, is seen as a significant technological advancement that enables companies to optimize operations, lower supply and delivery costs, and enhance profits and shareholder returns [3]. However, this pursuit of efficiency comes with serious negative repercussions, as it fuels the overuse of natural resources, environmental degradation, loss of cultural diversity, and the decline of traditional knowledge [10]. Therefore, businesses that reap the benefits of these systems must acknowledge that their financial success should not come at the expense of environmental sustainability or social well-being. This awareness is particularly crucial in an era where sustainability, ethical responsibility, and social accountability are increasingly vital concerns for a wide array of stakeholders, including citizens, labor organizations, political groups, NGOs, and regulatory authorities.

Supply chain management extends beyond the mechanisms that enable the movement of goods; it is a significant force that redefines the relationship between humanity and the environment. The processes by which natural resources are extracted, transported, and consumed have direct consequences on local ecosystems and fundamentally alter the social and cultural practices of the communities living within them. This creates a paradox: while logistical performance drives market globalization and facilitates the movement of goods on an unprecedented scale, it also

contributes to the homogenization of local customs, the weakening of cultural identities, and increased vulnerability of traditional societies [27]. The long-term effects are wide-ranging, affecting not only the economic realm but also social relationships and the environment. This position paper seeks to explore the complex dynamics that propel the “logistical machine” in reshaping cultures and landscapes, considering not only the immediate economic benefits—such as the creation of a unified global trade space—but also the resulting social and ecological costs. Central to this discussion is the question of whether logistical efficiency, despite its apparent advantages, is truly compatible with a sustainable future.

The “logistical machine” concept refers to the complex network of infrastructures, technologies, and organizational processes that facilitate the accelerated circulation of goods, resources, and information on a global scale. It extends beyond a simple rationalization of flows; rather, it constitutes a system that structures economic exchanges and power dynamics [24]. Beneath its seemingly technical neutrality, the “logistical machine” represents a force of economic and cultural homogenization, imposing global standards at the expense of local identities and traditions. Through the intensification of trade, it erodes the autonomy of local economies and marginalizes alternative practices, such as short supply chains, local production, and self-sufficiency. Structured around the neo-liberal model [13], the “logistical machine” concentrates power in the hands of dominant players, who set the standards and prioritize their interests, often undermining social and environmental stability. Consequently, managing global supply chains is not only about efficiency but also serves as a means of exerting control over local territories, ways of life, and ecosystems, ultimately fostering increased reliance on transnational flows and the uniformity of production and consumption practices.

The primary objective of this position paper is to critically analyze the far-reaching impact of global supply chains on human societies, ecosystems, and local cultures. Rather than viewing them solely through the lens of efficiency and flow optimization, this paper seeks to underscore their role in structuring power relations, standardizing consumption patterns, and increasing dependence on multinational corporations. My goal is to examine the profound and often overlooked consequences of the “logistics machine,” which is actively shaping contemporary economies by imposing a globalized model at the expense of local particularities, traditions, and sustainable practices. To clarify these critical issues and illustrate key mechanisms in tangible terms, this position paper integrates illustrative boxes—an approach increasingly adopted in management research to provide relevant insights into complex phenomena. Several foundational works on methodology, including Miles *et al.* [15] and Yin [30], emphasize the effectiveness of illustrative boxes in enhancing comprehension, contextualizing theoretical discussions, and strengthening argumentation in position papers. By incorporating this approach, I aim to make the analysis more accessible, engaging, and empirically grounded.

This position paper addresses the primary objective in three main sections, each exploring a different facet of the limits of the “logistical machine.” First, I examine the ecological impact of the relentless drive toward ever-faster global supply chains, emphasizing the destruction of local ecosystems, depletion of natural resources, and collapse of biodiversity. This highlights the fact that, while the “logistical machine” enables an unprecedented acceleration in the circulation of goods, it also incurs significant environmental costs, most of which remain largely invisible to consumers. Second, I explore the social and cultural dimensions of this managerial reality, analyzing how global supply chains foster the homogenization of consumer behavior and lifestyles. Ancestral knowledge, often deeply rooted in sustainable relationships with nature, is gradually being replaced by standardized, industrialized practices, creating a profound divide between local cultures and globalized economic models. Third, I conclude by presenting the “logistical machine” as an instrument of economic and cultural domination, emphasizing its

pivotal role in the concentration of economic power and the increasing marginalization of local economies.

2. GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS: ACCELERATING DISINTEGRATION

Since the 1980s, with the gradual triumph of neo-liberal policies, logistical performance has become a key driver of market globalization. The pressure to meet growing global demand, with increasingly impatient Western consumers sensitive to ultra-fast, low-cost procurement systems [19], has led to the massive, uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources. This dynamic is sustained using increasingly sophisticated logistical facilities, ranging from mega warehouses to expansive international transport networks. The raw materials needed for sectors such as fashion, high-tech, and automobiles—extracted on a massive scale—require rare metals, forests, and oceans that were once preserved, but are now exploited to support mass production. The intensification of consumption, driven by the efficiency of supply chain processes, is having devastating effects on biodiversity, as it leads to the accelerated disappearance of certain natural habitats and animal and plant species at an alarming rate [25]. By organizing a continuous flow of goods across borders, the “logistical machine” is pushing ecosystems—already weakened by centuries of human colonization and exploitation—toward a point of no return.

Historically supported by sustainable natural resource management practices, local economies are now profoundly disrupted. Indigenous communities, who depend on nature for their subsistence and cultural traditions, are witnessing their ways of life being progressively destroyed by the dominance of global supply chains (see the Australian case studied by Lawrence *et al.* [9]). Traditional agricultural systems, which rely on sustainable soil and forest management, are increasingly threatened by the arrival of models that prioritize large-scale exploitation to the detriment of the local environment. The “logistical machine” plays a central role in this process, enabling multinational corporations to penetrate territories that were previously managed autonomously by local communities. Rich in biodiversity and ancestral knowledge, these territories are drained of their resources and replaced by monocultures or infrastructure projects that serve external interests (see the Colombian case in Box 1). Ancestral knowledge, which underpins integrated ecosystem and natural resource management, is slowly disappearing as traditional communities abandon agricultural practices like subsistence farming and gathering in favor of industrialized models—often incompatible with the preservation of biodiversity [28]. This phenomenon of substitution only widens the gap between local, sustainable cultures and globalized, “productivist” ones.

Box 1. Extractivism, Violence, and Global Supply Chains: The Colombian Case

Nearly 40% of Colombia’s land has been allocated to multinational corporations for natural resource extraction. While mining remains the most prominent extractive industry, large-scale agroforestry monocultures follow a similar pattern. Environmental scientist Macarena Gómez-Barris highlights the connection between pine and eucalyptus plantations and extractivism, describing it as a modern form of colonialism that displaces native ecosystems, plants, and communities in favor of non-native tree species cultivated for global supply chains. Colombia’s reliance on extractivism is deeply intertwined with its history of violence. Sociologists Eloísa Berman-Arévalo and Diana Ojeda highlight how paramilitary groups engaged in violence—including massacres, sexual assault, torture, and forced displacement—to clear land for palm oil plantations and other extractive industries during Colombia’s decades-long armed conflict. Despite the 2016 peace agreement between the government and the Marxist-Leninist guerilla group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), violence continues to play a role in expanding industries that support global supply chains. This ongoing violence underscores the persistent link between paramilitary groups and resource exploitation.

Source: Adapted from <https://www.ritimo.org/> (Accessed February 14, 2025).

The speed with which global supply chains are deployed makes any attempt to turn back the clock virtually impossible. The emphasis on mass production and instant consumption is permanently changing the dynamic between human societies and the natural world. The neo-liberal order, driven by cost optimization and the pursuit of short-term profitability for shareholders, systematically disregards natural rhythms and cultural practices grounded in slow, sustainable cycles. The global market, by disregarding these natural rhythms, follows a homogenizing approach that fails to recognize the secondary consequences of rapid flows, such as resource depletion, soil degradation, and the erosion of cultural traditions. Unfortunately, the environmental and social costs of this model remain largely unseen, as local communities—often the most vulnerable—lack the power and financial resources to challenge the “logistical machine.” As we have seen in Brazil [5], as well as in Canada and the United States, the voices of indigenous communities are frequently marginalized, and their knowledge is dismissed as outdated in the face of market globalization. In short, the systematic exploitation of resources and the rise of global supply chains are exacerbating inequalities while eroding cultures and knowledge that have persisted for centuries.

3. GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS: DESTROYING ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE

As previously noted, one of the most damaging consequences of global supply chain dominance is the gradual loss of ancestral knowledge, which plays a crucial role in preserving the balance between humanity and the environment. This knowledge, passed down orally from generation to generation, is based on the respectful and sustainable management of rare natural resources. In many indigenous communities, farming, fishing, and forest management are not merely means of subsistence, but practices deeply embedded in cosmogonies and belief systems that promote a harmonious relationship with nature [29]. Integrated resource management systems have been refined over centuries to ensure ecosystem sustainability, considering the resilience of the environment. However, the expansion of global supply chains imposes resource extraction and industrial production models that fragment and dismantle this accumulated knowledge. Faced with shareholder pressure, ancestral practices are pushed to the periphery, dismissed as ineffective or too slow relative to the financial returns expected from modern activities [6]. This can be seen as a form of “progressive cultural decay,” accelerated by standardization policies that favor one-size-fits-all methods, disregarding local specificities.

Rooted in cultural diversity and traditional knowledge, indigenous communities are now bearing the full brunt of the “logistical machine” spawned by neo-liberalism (see Box 2). In many parts of the world, short supply chains and circular economies, which emphasize the complementary nature of different human activities, are vanishing under the pressure of industrial production and large-scale physical distribution networks. In South America’s indigenous communities, for instance, knowledge related to the cultivation and use of medicinal plants is rapidly disappearing [4]. Younger generations, drawn by the economic opportunities offered by urban centers—such as professional careers, leisure, and consumerism—are increasingly abandoning this knowledge in favor of jobs in industrial or commercial sectors, where the connection to nature is severed. Meanwhile, multinational corporations are extracting local resources on a massive scale to fuel global supply chains, disregarding the sustainable practices that once ensured ecosystem regeneration. This appropriation extends beyond raw material extraction; it is also leading to the erosion of the cultural and social practices that have long structured indigenous communities. Severed from their traditional environments, they are gradually losing their autonomy and identity.

Box 2. Indigenous Communities at Risk: The Impact of Global Supply Chains

Over 470 million indigenous people live across 90 countries, making up about 6% of the global population, yet they represent more than 18% of those living in extreme poverty. Historically, they have lost control of their lands, territories, and resources, a process exacerbated by the unrelenting growth of global supply chains. Although indigenous communities have contributed minimally to climate change and biodiversity loss, they bear a disproportionate burden from environmental destruction. Their extensive ecological knowledge, however, offers significant potential for advancing conservation and sustainably managing natural resources, ultimately supporting ecosystem resilience. Moreover, indigenous peoples have long developed diverse, sustainable, and nutritious food systems grounded in traditional land and resource management practices. These systems are increasingly at risk due to the rise of the neo-liberal model, which prioritizes large-scale industrial agriculture and resource extraction. Incorporating indigenous knowledge into environmental policies and supply chain strategies is crucial for protecting biodiversity, strengthening food security, and fostering more sustainable, equitable development paths globally.

Source: Adapted from <https://www.ifad.org/> (Accessed December 29, 2024).

The cultural and environmental devastation is accompanied by a notable disregard for ancestral knowledge, which is frequently dismissed as obsolete when compared to modern science and technology. In modern capitalist societies, knowledge is expected to be quantifiable, profitable, and scalable. However, ancestral knowledge, grounded in empirical observation and oral transmission, defies these criteria and is relegated to the realm of folklore or anthropological curiosity [23]. Yet, this knowledge holds countless solutions to contemporary ecological challenges, such as sustainable soil management, efficient water use, and biodiversity preservation, to name just a few. Its disappearance, replaced by standardized, intensive practices, only heightens the vulnerability of ecosystems and the societies that depend on them. By narrowing the diversity of resource management systems, global supply chains accelerate a process of standardization that, far from guaranteeing efficiency, exposes populations to ecological and cultural risks [22]. The erasure or destruction of ancestral knowledge not only results in the loss of heritage but also signifies the abandonment of a relationship with the world built on sustainability and resilience.

4. GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS: REINFORCING ECONOMIC HEGEMONY

Beyond its role in ecological destruction, the “logistical machine” serves as a powerful tool for the domination of the powerful over the weak, promoting a standardized vision of the world shaped by the interests of large corporations, their shareholders, and international markets. Production, distribution, and consumption standards are set by economic players who, often, pay little attention to the specificities of indigenous communities, viewing the planet as a village, to borrow McLuhan’s [14] famous expression. By marginalizing short supply chains and circular systems, even as geopolitical tensions could one day pave the way for friend-shoring [18], the “logistical machine” encourages increasing dependence on transnational flows, relegating local cultures to “relics of the past.” Economic globalization, largely facilitated by logistical infrastructure, leads to a homogenization of values, aspirations, and *habitus* [2]. The products available on the market no longer reflect local identities but are instead aligned with international standards dictated by profitability imperatives. The process of neo-liberalism not only contributes to the erasure of particularities but also fosters growing dependence on multinational corporations.

A prominent example of economic dominance is the industrialization of food, which turns traditional products into standardized commodities, often conflicting with local production and consumption methods. In regions like West Africa, where agriculture has historically relied on a

diverse array of crops tailored to specific environmental conditions, the entry of large agri-businesses has profoundly altered ecosystems and eating habits [17]. Local foodstuffs are gradually being replaced by imported products or hybrid seeds reliant on chemical inputs, leaving farmers vulnerable to global market fluctuations. By altering production methods and introducing processed foods into daily diets, the agri-food industry is reshaping traditional diets and slowly erasing culinary knowledge passed down through generations. The impact goes beyond nutrition: it is also transforming the “social fabric” that surrounds food production and preparation, replacing communal practices with individualized, market-driven models [12]. The dominance of the agri-food industry demonstrates how the “logistical machine” plays a central role in global cultural restructuring, to the detriment of the resilience and sustainability of local food systems.

By massifying flows and standardizing consumption patterns, the “logistical machine” establishes an omnipresent hierarchy, gradually marginalizing territories and indigenous communities that do not conform to globalized managerial norms [1]. Those who resist or are unable to adopt the standards set by powerful economic forces are pushed into precarious positions, becoming invisible in the idealized narrative of economic development. The neoliberal model, which prioritizes short-term profitability at the cost of social and ecological balance, further concentrates power in the hands of a few economic players. From this vantage point, global supply chains are more than mere infrastructures facilitating the movement of goods worldwide; they actively shape an economic hegemony that dictates not only what is produced but also *how*, *by whom*, and *for whom* [16]. By enforcing a standardized consumer culture, the “logistical machine” erodes local traditions and reinforces the dominance of multinational corporations over individual and collective choices. As a result, it nurtures a world where cultural diversity is increasingly sacrificed for economic efficiency, as illustrated by the example of Senegal (see Box 3).

Box 3. Global Supply Chains Transforming Diets in Senegal

In many West African capitals, including Dakar and smaller cities in Senegal, imported bread and broken rice are increasingly becoming staples, replacing traditional local products. This shift is particularly evident in the country’s eating habits. Millet, the main local cereal, is being abandoned in favor of imported goods. Breakfast typically consists of bread, while lunch often features rice-based dishes or sandwiches. In contrast, evening meals, which are generally less nutritionally demanding, may include millet or bread-based dishes like pasta, eggs, or fried foods. These changing food preferences in Senegal are closely linked to agricultural policies that have prioritized cash crops over local food production. The importation of broken rice began during the colonial era, aimed at boosting peanut production rather than millet farming. In the post-independence period, Senegal’s dependency on imported rice deepened, especially with the rise of global supply chains in the 1980s, which made it easier for Southeast Asian rice to flood local markets.

Source: Adapted from <http://www.revue-economie-et-humanisme.eu/> (Accessed July 6, 2024).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Each position paper presents an argument on a controversial issue or current debate, defending a specific thesis while offering supporting evidence [20]. This is the objective of the present position paper, which examines the far-reaching impact of the “logistical machine” on human societies, the environment, and local cultures. In analyzing the rise of neo-liberal global supply chains, I aim to highlight the profound destruction of ancestral knowledge, the degradation of local ecosystems, and the homogenization of lifestyles driven by the imposition of global standards. My analysis also reveals that the “logistical machine” plays a central role in economic and cultural domination, enforcing a standardized approach to production, consumption, and the exploitation of natural resources. This process is fueled by increasing standardization, continuous optimization of flows, and a diminishing opportunity for local adaptation and resilience.

Therefore, beyond a purely operational view of global supply chains, it is crucial to question the negative consequences they bring, which ultimately shape global power dynamics and contribute to the predatory extraction and unequal distribution of natural resources across different regions of the world.

5.1. Contributions

Unlike many existing studies that focus primarily on the operational aspects of supply chains—such as efficiency, profit, and flow optimization—this position paper shifts the focus to explore the broader social and environmental consequences of global supply chains. While traditional approaches often overlook or downplay the effects on indigenous knowledge, local ecosystems, and cultural diversity, this analysis brings these frequently neglected dimensions to the forefront. By highlighting the harmful impacts of global supply chains, this paper challenges conventional views and advocates for a more inclusive recognition of neoliberal practices. Position papers, by nature, do not rely on traditional empirical evidence, and this one follows that format. Instead of presenting detailed case studies or quantitative data, it uses illustrative examples to underline the larger trends and consequences of complex managerial situations. In the context of this position paper, these examples aim to shed light on the negative effects of global supply chains on local communities and ecosystems, offering qualitative evidence that fosters reflection and critical engagement. While empirical studies, such as the work by Grivins *et al.* [7], provide valuable data-driven insights, my contribution seeks to provoke thought on the broader, often-overlooked consequences of supply chain management.

Theoretically, this position paper contributes to the discussion of the “logistical machine” by offering a critical analysis of the environmental and social consequences of global supply chains. It challenges traditional perspectives that focus primarily on optimizing flows and increasing profitability, without addressing the negative consequences for indigenous communities and local ecosystems. The key task is to propose a revision of the conventional paradigms related to supply chain management, by introducing crucial dimensions largely overlooked by the *managerial doxa*. The economic dominance facilitated by global supply chains has significant, often detrimental, consequences for biodiversity and natural resource management systems. In short, the position paper emphasizes the urgent need for a deeper knowledge of the power dynamics behind globalized flows, along with the homogenization of cultures and lifestyles that they entail. On a managerial level, supply chain managers must rethink their strategies, considering the broader impacts of the “logistical machine” on local societies. This necessitates a reassessment of traditional performance models in the light of pressing contemporary social, ecological, and cultural challenges [11].

5.2. Extending Theoretical Foundations

One counterargument to this position is that global supply chains bring economic benefits, such as job creation, technological advancements, and poverty reduction, particularly in developing countries [26]. Proponents of globalization argue that supply chains increase access to goods, improve living standards, and stimulate economic growth. While valid, these points do not address the negative externalities of global supply chains, including environmental degradation, cultural homogenization, and the erosion of indigenous knowledge. Thus, it is crucial to consider both sides of the argument for a full understanding of the issue. To ground this crucial discussion, future investigations could draw on Polanyi’s [21] work on embedded economies and Latour’s [8] actor-network theory. Polanyi’s [21] “double movement” helps explain how societies resist the excesses of market-driven supply chains, while Latour’s [8] framework highlights the interplay between technological infrastructures and social dynamics. These perspectives offer insights into the power dynamics in global supply chains and their impact on marginalized

communities. By incorporating these ideas, researchers can enrich the discourse on the “logistical machine” and its consequences, fostering more nuanced discussions on how to reform supply chain practices in a socially and ecologically responsible way.

5.3. Research Avenues

Four research avenues must be explored to identify supply chain issues in an increasingly complex, turbulent, and volatile global context. The first research avenue involves investigating credible alternatives to globalization, such as short supply chains, circular economies, and local production systems, which could provide solutions to the environmental and social problems exacerbated by global supply chains. The second research avenue focuses on exploring innovative approaches that integrate social justice into the functioning of the “logistical machine,” empowering indigenous communities and preserving ancestral knowledge wherever possible. The third research avenue examines natural resource governance mechanisms that respect ecosystems and local cultures, aiming to create more sustainable and equitable practices. Finally, the fourth research avenue explores the resilience of local production systems against disruptions caused by global supply chains, highlighting efforts that protect natural resources and foster sustainable development. By addressing these different areas, academic investigations can uncover strategies that offer a more balanced approach, fostering both economic efficiency and the well-being of local communities and the environment.

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