Plan Overview

A Data Management Plan created using DMPonline

Title: Theology of Bethma: A Kenotic Spiritual Framework for Community Resilience to Climate Change in Sri Lanka

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Project abstract:

As an island nation in the Global South, contemporary Sri Lanka faces many environmental, social, and economic challenges from climate change that disrupt people's daily lives. Over the last 25 years, governments, organisations, and religious communities have tried to improve people's lives, but unexpected, severe climate-related events such as the tsunami and Cyclone Ditwah have made this difficult. As a result, many leave the country in search of new job opportunities; poverty has affected many islanders; the younger generation moves into illegal job opportunities like drug dealing and sexual work; and most people live stressful lives, fearing for their future. To face this challenge, Sri Lanka needs a strong, structurally supported community resilience framework in the face of climate change. Sri Lanka, a multi-religious country with mainly Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Christian and tribal spiritual communities, needs a spiritual framework that speaks to the spirituality of Sri Lankan-ness.

Therefore, in this research, I ask: How can the spiritual, ethical and communal values embedded in the traditional agricultural Bethma practice inform the development of a new contextual kenotic spiritual framework that strengthens community resilience to climate change in contemporary Sri Lanka? This research seeks to understand how Bethma practising participants create meaning around the traditional agricultural practice of Bethma, from the perspective of its spiritual, ethical, and communal scope. It does not adopt a single, universal meaning for the practice of Bethma. Instead, it explores the meanings participants create within a specific South Asian Sri Lankan context shaped by pluralism and poverty. Therefore, by exploring the values participants associate with the practice and drawing on their religious, social, and cultural backgrounds, rather than treating Bethma as a fixed, defined phenomenon, this research adopts a constructivist paradigm to develop a new kenotic spiritual framework for community resilience to climate change in Sri Lanka.

This work aim to develop a new kenotic spiritual framework inspired by the traditional agricultural Bethma practice. This framework should be grounded in Sri Lanka's spiritual, communal, and ethical values to support community-based responses and build resilience to climate change. Ultimately, this work will guide Sri Lankans in overcoming the environmental, social, and economic challenges they face today due to climate change.

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Theology of Bethma: A Kenotic Spiritual Framework for Community Resilience to Climate Change in Sri Lanka

Data Collection

What data will you collect or create?

This research uses a qualitative methodology that does not assume numerical measurements adequately capture human experience; instead, it explores individual and community spiritualities, experiences, meanings, practices, and narratives.

The following types of data will be collected or created:

- **Interview data:**
- **Field notes**
- **Researcher's reflective notes**
- **Documentary data**
- **Visual data**
- **Participant observation data**
- **Research analysis data**

How will the data be collected or created?

Interviews will serve as a principal source of primary data. An interview guide will be structured around the research questions while giving participants the freedom to raise concerns they consider vital. Questions will explore participants’ understanding of Bethma practice; traditional knowledge of the practice; the ethical, cultural, religious, and spiritual scope of Bethma; resource sharing and communal relationships; communal responses to ecological challenges; and possibilities for theological interpretation of Bethma practice. With participants' informed consent, I will audio-record and transcribe interviews for analysis.

This research will use participant observation to explore Bethma practice as experienced and enacted within the community. Where access and ethical considerations allow, this work will observe key communal, spiritual, agricultural, ritual and decision-making processes in the day-to-day life of the Bethma-practising community. The study will also examine relevant documentary sources. These may include historical records; agricultural and irrigation documents; community records; government publications; oral or community histories; religious writings; academic studies; and theological writings. Documentary analysis will provide historical and contextual depth and synthesise evidence from multiple sources. Field notes, including documents, interactions, symbols, practices, relationships and other contextual features that may not be fully communicated through interviews, will serve as a research method in this study. In this work, a reflexive field journal will be maintained throughout the fieldwork to record spiritual dimensions, methodological decisions, assumptions, emerging interpretations and emotional responses.

Documentation and Metadata

What documentation and metadata will accompany the data?

Appropriate documentation and metadata will accompany the research data to help provide for consistency, transparency, traceability, and future use of the research materials.

The documentation includes research protocols, interview guides, participant information sheets, informed consent forms, field observation records, reflective field journals, transcription guidelines, translation notes and qualitative data analysis records.

Metadata is going to have:

• The date and where the data was collected (with some generalized locations when we need to keep participants anonymous)
• What kind of data was collected
• How did you go about collecting the data? (What research method)
• Which category of participant do you have?
• In what language was the data collected?
• What is the file format of the data?
• Do you have a code that identifies the participant anonymously?
• When and why was the data collected? (Data collection context)
• Descriptions of every dataset.

The labels for the interview transcripts will be created with unique participant codes instead of using the names of participants. All audio recordings, transcripts, field notes, photographs, and analytic documentation will be organized systematically using a standard set of file naming rules.

A data inventory and README file will be created to describe how the folders are organized, what is included in each folder, the naming convention used for files, the abbreviations used, and other relevant information needed to comprehend the data sets.

In addition to this, all records and related information (metadata) will be documented in a way that is consistent with the research data management policies of Vrije Universiteit and also complies with the relevant ethical guidelines and regulations governing the use of personal data.

Ethics and Legal Compliance

How will you manage any ethical issues?

The research will be conducted with an emphasis on justice, humility, and the recognition of each participant's dignity as part of its commitment to ethics. The research's ethical framework will be informed by the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam's ethical policies and the applicable Sri Lankan ethical guidelines. The research will incorporate these ethical standards into all aspects of the study including the protection of participants' personal data and maintaining the highest levels of research integrity, thereby ensuring that the study addresses the ethical requirements of both the global community and those specific to Sri Lanka.

Prior to beginning fieldwork, the appropriate VU research ethics committee will grant ethical review and approval. Participants will have clear knowledge regarding the purpose of the study, how it is conducted, potential risks associated with participation, and what they are entitled to. Consent from each participant will be obtained before conducting any interviews, audio recording sessions, or other forms of data collection.

Participation is voluntary. Participants can stop answering questions or withdraw from the study at any time as long as it falls within the guidelines of the consent process. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, the use of participant codes/pseudonyms will be used in all transcripts and publications.

The research will be conducted with respect for the local culture, the local community, and the power dynamic created by climate change, as well as the potential vulnerabilities that exist among farmers and communities impacted by climate change. The research will only gather personal or sensitive data if it is necessary to answer the questions being asked.

The research team will store research data (such as audio recordings, transcripts, consent records, and field notes) securely in approved VU research data facilities. Only authorized individuals will have access to the research data. The researcher will store identifiable information in a separate location from anonymized data.

The investigator will practice accountability (transparency), academic ethics (integrity), and awareness of their own impact upon the research process (reflexivity) throughout all stages of the research, and will disseminate the results in an ethical manner, i.e., in a way that accurately represents the participants' experiences/views.

How will you manage copyright and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) issues?

The management of copyright and IPR is consistent with VU Policy and Copyright Law. Original research materials will be managed consistent with VU Ownership Policy. All external sources of information will be appropriately credited/cited, and permission to use those external sources will be obtained when required. The use, sharing or publishing of research materials may be subject to restrictions; however, any such restriction will be adhered to. Uncertainties related to ownership and/or intellectual property rights should be referred to the PhD Supervisor and/or relevant VU Office.

Storage and Backup

How will the data be stored and backed up during the research?

All research-related materials such as audio files of interviews, transcripts of those files, field notes, photographs and other types of research-related material will be stored on a secure basis via YODA, VU’s approved system for storing research-related materials. There will be periodic backups of all research-related materials to protect against losing any of these materials. Materials will be systematically organized; however, materials containing identifying information will be kept separate from materials that contain only non-identifying information. In addition to following VU Research Data Management policies, all storage and backup processes for all research-related materials will also adhere to VU Research Data Management policies.

How will you manage access and security?

Access to research data stored in YODA will be restricted to the researcher and authorised supervisors where necessary. Appropriate password protection and security measures will be used to protect digital files. Personal and identifiable information,

including consent forms and participant details, will be stored separately with restricted access. Data will be anonymised or pseudonymised wherever possible to protect participants' identities and confidentiality. All data will be managed in accordance with VU policies and applicable data protection regulations.

Selection and Preservation

Which data are of long-term value and should be retained, shared, and/or preserved?

Long-term valuable research data will include anonymised interview transcripts, field observation notes, reflexive journals, qualitative coding and analysis records, relevant documentary materials and research findings. These data will be retained and preserved in YODA for future academic reference and research verification. Where ethically and legally permitted, anonymised datasets will be made accessible for future research. Audio recordings and identifiable personal information will be retained only as necessary and in accordance with VU policies and ethical requirements.

What is the long-term preservation plan for the dataset?

The selected research data, together with relevant documentation and metadata, will be preserved in YODA, VU's research data management platform. Data will be systematically organised and described with appropriate metadata to ensure they are Findable. Access will be managed according to ethical, legal and confidentiality requirements to ensure they are Accessible to authorised users. Data will be stored in appropriate, reusable file formats with sufficient documentation to support future understanding and Reuse. Identifiable and confidential information will remain restricted or be securely deleted in accordance with VU's data retention policies.

Data Sharing

How will you share the data?

Anonymised research data, including interview transcripts, field observation notes, research documentation and metadata, will be shared through YODA, VU's research data management platform, where appropriate. Data sharing will take place only after ensuring that ethical approval, participants' consent, confidentiality and copyright requirements are met. Access will be provided to authorised researchers for academic and research purposes where appropriate.

Are any restrictions on data sharing required?

Yes. Access to identifiable personal information, interview audio recordings, consent forms and confidential participant information will be restricted to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality. Only anonymised data will be considered for sharing through YODA, subject to participants' consent and applicable ethical and legal requirements. Any restrictions relating to copyright, traditional Bethma knowledge and community confidentiality will be respected in accordance with VU policies.

Responsibilities and Resources

Who will be responsible for data management?

It will be my role as a researcher to take charge of the management of research data on a daily basis, which will involve collecting, organizing, documenting, securely storing, backing up, and preserving data using YODA. The PhD promotor will oversee my process to ensure adherence to the VU Research Data Management policy and ethics.

What resources will you require to deliver your plan?

The research will be undertaken in need of access to YODA for data storage and preservation, a computer with adequate security measures, audio recording devices, transcription and qualitative data analysis software, and secure internet connection. Other resources that will be needed include VU research data management guidelines, supervision, and ethical clearance. The above

mentioned resources will help with the management of research data.