

Transnational Institute Style Guide

Updated October 2022

This Style Guide covers most of the issues you are likely to face in writing for the Transnational Institute (TNI). It is intended to help you to write clearly and confidently. Following the guidelines will also help TNI to prepare your work for publication.

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Section 1: General Principles

TNI's publishing mission and audiences

TNI's mission is to strengthen international social movements with rigorous research, reliable information, sound analysis and constructive proposals that advance democratic policy change, social transformation and common solutions to global problems. Our main target audiences are activist scholars and leaders of social movements, but also include the media, policy-makers and opinion-formers. Our publications need to be rigorous, but not academic; accessible but not colloquial; critical but not simply polemical. Inaccurate or unsubstantiated claims, strident language, and 'colourful' metaphors prevent our arguments from being taken seriously and undermine our reputation.

Your writing therefore needs to be:

- **Credible:** well researched and supported by evidence
- **Accessible:** to a broad non-specialist audience

- **Appropriate:** in tone and voice
- **Additional:** increase understanding of critical issues
- **Radical:** get to the structural roots of critical issues
- **Propositional:** propose alternatives

General rules

Keep it simple and direct

TNI's content should be factually accurate but also concise and easy to read:

- Use numbered lists or bullet points to avoid complex sub-clauses
- Use the active rather than the passive voice ('Uruguay established the first state-controlled and legally regulated cannabis market' not 'the first state-controlled and legally regulated cannabis market was established by Uruguay')
- Make every word count – remember that adjectives may 'hector' rather than persuade
- Avoid clichés ('the new normal')
- Avoid colloquial or sensational language ('the poor are crushed under the jackboot of neoliberalism')
- Explain any technical or foreign terms you need to use
- If there is a choice, opt for shorter or more familiar words (e.g. 'uses' rather than 'utilises')

Use reputable sources – Reuters rather than Wikipedia, or *The Guardian* rather than a local newspaper, for instance; and ideally sources that are freely available and not behind a paywall or require a log-in account, so they can readily be checked. This is particularly important if your claims are contentious.

Avoid making or repeating allegations that might expose TNI to libel actions. For example, if you say that a named or easily identifiable company or private individual has engaged in harmful or pejorative action or behaviour *you must substantiate that allegation. This is extremely important as otherwise* you could expose TNI to the risk of committing a libel. TNI routinely reviews any legal risks and makes changes accordingly. In all such cases, the decision of TNI's communications coordinator is final.

Copyright and plagiarism

If you cite or use other people's work, you must provide sources and credits. If you intend to republish someone else's work, you must seek permission or follow the conditions of the license under which it is published.

When research and writing work for TNI is commissioned to external people, TNI will recognise the intellectual authorship of the writer but will retain the exclusive right to make decisions about how the materials and product developed are used and promoted.

As far as possible, TNI releases its own content under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 licence. This means people can share or reproduce the work but must cite TNI and the license, and must use the materials for non-commercial purposes.

Interview material or case studies

Academic research involving human subjects requires formal ethical clearance, including the use and storage of personal data; as well as informing interviewees about the purpose of the research and of the right to decline to answer a question or to leave the interview at any time without giving reasons; and, where this is appropriate, that their interviews will be anonymised (such as using pseudonyms). It is usual to check back with participants before finalising an interview record.

While it is seldom *legally* binding to observe these standards in TNI publications, it is a basic courtesy to do so.

If you are interviewing people in their professional capacity, you must make clear to them beforehand whether this is on the record, and can be attributed; or off the record, and you should not divulge the person's name or make it easy for readers to infer their identity. For instance, 'according to a senior diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity ...'.

2 General presentation

Following our preferred style makes copyediting and layout simpler and therefore helps to minimise costs, and makes the publication process smoother.

Structure

Before getting started, agree on the format and structure and with your TNI contact. Broadly, this will include the following:

- Introduction: explain the motivation for this document and why it matters, and set out the structure
- Approach: describe the main sources (e.g. detailed interviews, documentary sources, company records)
- Main content: the substance of your argument, with supporting evidence
- Conclusions: the main conclusions arising from your content and analysis
- Policy recommendations: who needs to do what, and by when, to bring about the desired change

Formatting and layout

Do not use embedded formatting, such as indented or automated numbering of paragraphs or referencing software. Use *italics* rather than bold for emphasis. Do not use hyperlinks in the body of the text; but please include these in the Endnotes and References, as this helps the copyeditor to check.

Graphics

Number Boxes, Figures, Tables and any other graphics sequentially (Figure 1, Figure 2; Table 1, Table 2, etc.) with a title or caption above. Below each graphic give the full source and indicate, where appropriate, that you have obtained permission to reproduce any copyrighted material.

You need to supply editable versions of any graphics not involving text, i.e. do not import these as images or PDFs. Save graphics that do not require copyediting, such as maps or photographs, in camera-ready form as separate files. Label each one clearly and indicate in the text where it should appear.

Make clear where a Box starts and ends: [Box] Content of box [/Box]

Headings

Use a maximum of three heading levels, and do not use automatic numbering for sub-sections.

Main title: **Bold with Significant Capitals for the Main Title: lower case for the sub-title**

Section headings: **Bold with Significant Capitals: lower case for sub-title**

Sub-section headings: **Bold sentence case**

Bullet points and numbered lists

Use a bulleted list for phrases or single sentences, with no full stop after each item:

- Item 1
- Item 2
- Item 3

Use a numbered list if one or more items includes more than one sentence, and end each item with a full stop:

1. Item 1.
2. Item 2.
3. Item 3.

References

Please follow these instructions as closely as possible, as correcting them is very time-consuming and will delay publication. Check that all URLs are live and link to material that is freely accessible, i.e. not behind a paywall or requiring readers to set up an account.

Organise references in alphabetical order, making sure to include all the works you have cited, always respecting the authors' original spelling, as follows:

Books

Tiwari, M. (2021) *Why Some Development Works: Understanding success*. London & New York: Zed Books.

Fregoso, R.L. and Bejarano, C.L. (Eds.) (2010) *Terrorizing Women: Feminicide in the Americas*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Chapter in edited volume

Goetz, A.M. (2008) 'Political cleaners: Women as the new anti-corruption force'. In A. Cornwall, E. Harrison and A. Whitehead (Eds.) *Gender Myths and Feminist Fables: The struggle for interpretive power in gender and development* (pp. 85–103). Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Journal article

Restrelli, G. (2020) 'The effects of development aid on irregular migration to Europe: Deterrence or attraction'. *Development Policy Review* 39(6): 926–952. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dpr.12546>

Newspaper article

Borger, J. (2022) 'Biden warns Putin of "severe costs" of Ukraine invasion in phone call', 12 February.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/feb/12/biden-putin-ukraine-phone-call-us-russia>

If you refer to **more than one work by the same author(s)**, start with the earliest.

- Kabeer, N. (2000) *The Power to Choose: Bangladeshi women and labour market decisions in London and Dhaka*. London & New York: Verso.
- Kabeer, N. (2005) *Inclusive Citizenship: Meanings and expressions*. New Delhi: Zed Books.

If you refer to works by someone **both as a sole author and the first of one or more co-authors**, start with the sole-author entries.

- Kabeer, N. (2010) *Gender & Social Protection Strategies in the Informal Economy*. New Delhi: Routledge.
- Kabeer, N., Mumtaz, K. and Sayeed, A. (2010) 'Beyond risk management: Vulnerability, social protection and citizenship in Pakistan'. *Journal of International Development* 22(1): 1–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.1538>

If you refer to **more than one work by the same author(s) published in the same year**, use a letter suffix to the year of each work according to the first time you cite it.

- Kabeer, N. (March 2011a) 'Between affiliation and autonomy: navigating pathways of women's empowerment and autonomy and gender justice in rural Bangladesh'. *Development and Change* 42(2): 499–528. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2011.01703.x>

- Kabeer, N. (2011b) 'Gender, schooling and global social justice'. *Comparative Education* 47(2): 283–4.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2011.555142>

For **references to online material**, such as blogs or company websites, name the author or source, date of publication (if known, otherwise n.d.), followed by the title and URL (check this is still valid before submitting your work to TNI).

- Sibilski, L. J. (29 August 2016) 'The Paralympic Games in Rio: Where the (dis)abilities matter'. *People, Spaces, Deliberation*. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/publicsphere/comment/8424#comment-8424>

In-text citations

Use the following style:

- (López 2016: 20).
- (López and Hernández 2015: 66–7).
- (López, Hernández, Ardón et al. 2016; López 2016:55).

Quoting from other sources

If your quotation is brief, 'include it in the text with the reference following' (Smith 2020: 12). For a longer quote, whether from a published work or interview, display it as follows:

This is an extended quotation from another work, which is too long to be included in the main body of the text because it is roughly 50 words in length. Rather than the precise number of words, it is clear that for a longer quote it is easier for the reader to grasp that you are citing from another source if you display it in this way. (Smith 2020: 13–14)

If you are referring to material from official sources, such as a United Nations Convention or European Commission document, or to legislation, include the paragraph or article as well as the page reference. This makes it easier for readers to find the quotation, and also helps translators as page numbers match in different languages.

Endnotes

Use endnotes (not footnotes) sparingly, placing the superscript directly *after* the punctuation mark,⁴ for

- Personal communications, giving the date and place of the interview or email correspondence
- Additional information that would otherwise interrupt the flow of your argument, and cannot be included in the References
- URLs to material cited in the text, but which is not included in the References

3 Presentational specifics

Acronyms

An ‘alphabet soup’ makes a document hard to read. Use an abbreviation or acronyms only if you use them frequently, and spell them out in full on first use and pay attention to conventions around definite articles, eg the Transnational Institute (TNI) (not ‘the TNI’), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (not ‘the UNDP’) but International Labour Organization (ILO) (‘the ILO’). If an acronym is not derived from English, give the full name in the original language, e.g. *Desarrollo Integral de la Familia* (DIF). Do not use a full stop after contractions or in acronyms, e.g. Dr, Ms, BBC, UNESCO, UK, US.

If you use them in a sentence, spell out ‘for example’ and ‘that is’, but not if you are using them in parenthesis (e.g. in this way) (i.e. like this). If you use e.g. in parenthesis, do not end your list of examples with etc.

Apostrophes

An apostrophe shows possession, e.g. ‘the dog’s dinner’ (one dog) or ‘the dogs’ dinner’ (several dogs). It is also used to represent a missing letter in contractions such as ‘didn’t’, ‘couldn’t’ (but use contractions only if you are quoting direct speech). Do not use apostrophes in acronyms and abbreviations (PPPs, NGOs) or dates (1960s).

Capitalisation

Use upper case (capital letters) only if you are referring to a proper noun in full (e.g. ‘Susan George, a TNI fellow’, but ‘TNI Fellow Susan George’). Similarly, do not capitalise government, church, state, party, bills, acts and so on, unless

you are referring to a specific one (the Green Party, the Humanist Society, the Amnesty Act (2020), the Government of India (GoI)).

Use north/northern south/southeast, east/eastern and west/western for geopolitical regions and locations. See Appendix 2 for specific TNI preferences.

Currencies and Measurements

Give the euro or US dollar equivalent for all other currencies, e.g. ‘Japan approved a JPY1.8 trillion (\$18 billion) stimulus package’. Abbreviate dollars like this: \$50 (US dollars); A\$50 (Australian dollars); HK\$50 (Hong Kong dollars); use the € sign in figures (‘it cost €50 billion’) and ‘euro’ (or any other currency) written out if you use it in a sentence (‘there are eight EU countries that do not use the euro’).

Use the international metric system of units or give the metric equivalent for other measurements (e.g. miles, pounds, gallons, acres; crore, lakh, viss) – spelling them in full on first use, e.g. kilometres (km), kilos (kg), grams (g), tonnes (MT), litres (l), and hectares (ha).

Dates and times

Use the day/month/ year format for specific dates, e.g. 5 November 2015. For decades, use figures, e.g. the 1960s (not the sixties or ‘60s), and spell out centuries in full, e.g. ‘in the nineteenth century’, ‘a sixteenth-century building’.

Use specific dates, e.g. ‘in 2021’ rather than ‘last year’; ‘in February 2022’ rather than ‘this month’; remember that seasons differ between the northern and southern hemispheres, so avoid ‘spring 2022’.

If you use a shortened date (e.g. 9/11) give the full date (11 September 2001) and a brief explanation on first use.

For times, as a rule use the 24-hour clock, i.e. 23h00.

Geography

Use the United Nations geoscheme to refer to major regions, apart from the more commonly used and understood. For instance, ‘Middle East’ is more commonly used than ‘west Asia’, although the appropriate term may depend on the specific context.

The Americas refers to all countries on the continent. Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) refers to countries south of the United States and in the Caribbean (note that Puerto Rico is a US territory). South America is the sub-continent south of Panama. North America always includes Canada and the US, and in specific contexts (e.g. North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA) may include Mexico – although Mexico is always part of LAC. Never use America to refer solely to the United States, nor Americans to refer to US citizens and residents, e.g. ‘this applies to US voters’.

Hyphens

Hyphens often fall out of use as a word becomes more familiar. For example, email, laptop, online, and website were all hyphenated originally. See Appendix 4 for TNI's currently preferred spellings.

Hyphens are always used in compound adjectives, e.g. a capacity-building project, a district-level government official, and with short and common adverbs, e.g. an ill-prepared report, much-needed reforms, well-established principles, but not after adverbs ending in -ly (e.g. politically naive, wholly owned), though once again common terms such as 'peacekeeping forces' are often no longer hyphenated.

Inclusive language

If you refer to a person or group of people, respect how they describe themselves – just as you would expect others to treat you.

Use gender-neutral language – 'police officer' not 'policeman' (see Appendix 3 for examples) – and focus on the person rather than a characteristic – 'a man who uses a wheelchair' and *never* 'a wheelchair-bound man'; 'people with a disability' not 'the disabled', 'people living in poverty' not 'the poor'.

Do not refer to personal characteristics (age, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religious faith, civil status etc.) unless it is strictly relevant to do so. For example, it might be relevant to refer to a person's age in the following sentence: 'Six people were killed in the bombing raid, including a three-year-old child'; but not in the following: 'A 61-year-old woman, who witnessed the bombing, spoke to reporters'.

Unless you refer to boys and men as 'males', do not refer to women and girls as 'females'. Similarly, unless you describe an adult man in relation to his civic or family status (husband, father, uncle, son, brother etc) should you describe an adult woman in similar terms (wife, daughter, mother etc.). Do not assume that a man is the 'head of household' or refer to 'female-headed households' (or 'female-maintained households') unless this is a category used in a formal setting, such as a national census, Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) or similar.

Use the plural form – 'when students go to university they ...' rather than 'when a student goes to school, he ...'. When it is pertinent to refer to a person's gender, use their preferred name and pronouns (*she, her, hers, he, him, his, they, them, their, theirs*).

If it is relevant to refer to sexuality and transgender, follow the [GLAAD media reference guide](#).

In particular, avoid terms like 'sexual preference' or 'lifestyle', which suggest choice. See Appendices 1 and 2 for further resources.

Names

Always check that you have spelled a person's name correctly. Use the title (if appropriate), given and family name on the first occasion, and the family name thereafter, e.g. 'Professor Guy Standing spoke ... Standing said ...'. Check the correct title: for instance, 'President Macron says that France is not joining the diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics' ... but 'the British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, is accused of repeatedly lying to parliament'.

Use the spelling and syntax an organisation or company uses; check the relevant website if you are unsure. Common examples include Coca-Cola, easyJet, iPhone, Lloyd's (insurance), but Lloyds Bank.

NB United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – never UN Development Programme or United Nations Development Program. Common non-government organisations (NGOs) are ActionAid, Oxfam International (unless referring to a specific national Oxfam, e.g. Oxfam GB; never OXFAM).

Keep accents in foreign words.

Avoid foreign terms where a plain English version exists – 'all other things being equal' rather than 'ceteris paribus'. Do not italicise foreign terms in common use (e.g. ad hoc, de facto, habeas corpus). If you need to use a less familiar foreign word, use italics. Include an English translation in brackets on first use: *panchayat* (village council), The Taoiseach (the Irish Prime Minister). Otherwise translate foreign names of groups, parties, institutions, etc: the German Christian Democratic Union (not the Christlich Demokratische Union), the Shining Path (not Sendero Luminoso).

Break this rule if the name is better known untranslated: Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), although Doctors without Borders is equally correct.

Use local place names, except for capital and major cities that are commonly anglicised. For example: Berne, Cologne, Florence, Geneva, Kyiv, Lisbon, Mexico City, Milan, Moscow, Munich, Naples, Rome, Sardinia, Sicily, Turin, Venice, Zurich. The name of country is Myanmar, but the adjective and national language is 'Burmese' unless referring to a specific ethnic minority or other language spoken in Myanmar.

For other place names, and to transliterate non-Roman alphabets, see the list of resources in Appendix 2.

Numbers

- Spell out numbers from one to nine and terms referring to millions and billions.
- Use figures for other numbers: 1,000; 10, 000; 100,000
- Use the English numbering convention: 1,000 rather than 1.000

- Use numbers for measurements and ages (12 km, 15 kg, 10 years old)
- Use the symbol % rather than per cent or percent (24%)
- Spell out (or better, avoid) numbers at the beginning of a sentence ('Fifty women and 45 men came to the meeting ...')

Punctuation

- Use 'single quotation marks' for direct speech and to enclose the name of a document or a term or word you are defining
- Use single quotation marks at the start and end of a quote and double inverted commas for quotes within a quote ('The woman said "No means no", and left the room'.)
- Retain spelling, punctuation (except inverted commas) and capitalisation in quoted material
- Place commas *outside* the quotation marks. ('He called it "my policy", even though the IMF had imposed it'.)
The full stop falls *inside* the quotation mark only if the material quoted is a complete sentence
- Indent quotes of longer than 50 words and do not italicise them
- Indicate an ellipsis like this: bla bla... bla bla

Spelling

Use UK English spelling, grammar and punctuation. You may find it helpful to set the language on your word-processing programme to English (UK). You must, however, respect the original conventions used in any directly quoted material

If you are unsure about any spelling, consult the Concise Oxford English Dictionary or *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, except for -ise endings.

See Appendix 4 for TNI's preferred spellings.

Titles

Use professional or honorary titles for named persons only if these are relevant, e.g. ‘Dr David Nabarro, the special envoy on COVID-19 for the World Health Organization, ...’; ‘Professor Chris Whitty is Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for England and Dr Michael McBride is the CMO for Northern Ireland’.

Appendix 1: Online resources

- *The Guardian* lists common spellings and current usage alphabetically
<https://www.theguardian.com/guardian-observer-style-guide-a>
- To translate other non-Roman alphabets, <http://transliteration.eki.ee/>
- For place names, Permanent Committee on Geographical Names for British Official Use,
www.pcgn.org.uk/index.htm
- United Nations Geoscheme list of regions and sub-regions,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_geoscheme#List_of_regions_and_subregions
- [GLAAD media reference guide](#) on sexuality and gender
- World Bank terminology database: <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/Terminology.pdf>

Appendix 2 Gender-neutral and inclusive language

- Many government departments, health authorities, NGOs and others have policies on gender-neutral language. Some terms are by now so familiar that it is hard to remember the sexist terms they replaced – cabin crew or flight attendants, committee chair, cleaners/cleaning staff, firefighters, police officers, supervisors (in place of ‘foremen’) and so on. But there is far more to gender-neutral language than no longer referring to ‘a lady doctor’, ‘a woman priest’, ‘a manageress’ or ‘a male nurse’; to Ms as the default equivalent of Mr (French official documents now use Madame (Mme Dupont) as the sole equivalent of Monsieur (M or Mr) Dupont).

- Some words derived from other languages may be deliberately made gender-neutral, e.g. the word ‘ombudsman’ comes from Swedish, but some prefer ‘ombudsperson’ (by analogy with ‘spokesperson’); whether this is appropriate will depend on the specific context.
- For languages that have gendered nouns, as many European languages do, there are additional pitfalls. An excellent and comprehensive source is *Gender Neutral Language in the European Parliament* https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/151780/GNL_Guidelines_EN.pdf

Appendix 3: TNI’s common words, preferred terms and spellings

Agrofuels (preferred to not agro-fuels and avoid biofuels where possible)

Agroecology (not agro-ecology)

Cannabis (rather than **Marijuana** hashish, marijuana, pot or weed)

Capitalism Use carefully and accurately ie when referring to the economic system based on private ownership of the means of production and their operation for profit

Civil society Use only in specific cases, e.g. civil society organisations (CSOs); in other cases use ‘social movements’.

Cooperatives, co-ops

COVID-19 in all caps with a hyphen between D and 19 is preferred to Corona virus, Corona or Covid-19

Developed/Developing world Avoid use of these generalisations for countries that suggest that nations are monolithic entities and that there is one type or model of development

Emerging economies/emerging countries is also a term we discourage, along with ‘rich’ and poor countries. Better to use **low-income, middle-income, high-income** countries which at least have clearer definitions (see [World Bank](#)) or alternatively name the group they belong to eg G20, OECD

Global South/North Use a more precise term wherever possible. Be as precise you can about which countries you are referring to – and clear about the reasons for opting for one set of terms rather than another. Global South/North are perfectly acceptable but should be used sparingly and only where no other option will suffice. As there are different understandings of the term, a footnote to define your definition is useful.

grassroots

growers of illicit prohibited plants (or state the product, e.g. opium poppy farmers rather than drug producers)

impoverished (rather than ‘poor’; or as suggests process and not natural state). Or use ‘people with low incomes’, ‘people living in poverty’

landgrabs, landgrabbing (not land grabbing or land-grabbing)

Myanmar rather than Burma, but the national language is we still refer to Burmese; also used as the language or as an adjectively (except for ethnic minorities) ‘Burmese civil society’

neoliberal (no hyphen); use sparingly to refer to economic policies enacted as part of the Washington Consensus period; use sparingly to refer to the post-Pinochet, Thatcherite/Reagan era

problematic drug use or harmful drug use. Use **addiction** only in specific cases. Avoid **addict**.

think tank

Emerging economies Economies do not ‘emerge’, but grow or expand – or shrink

Third World Use only for proper nouns, e.g. Third World Institute/Instituto del Tercer Mundo, *Third World Quarterly*

trade union but Trades Union Congress (TUC)

transnational corporations (rather than multinational corporations); can use TNCs after it has been spelled out once

UK refers to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (NI); British is the adjective for the country and for nationals, not English (unless you are referring only to England). Great Britain, or Britain, does not include NI.

US Use– for country and adjectivally. rather than USA. Do not use NB America/Americans to refer to the US or US citizens/residents.

Workforce but labour force

worldwide