



DECOLONIZING KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING SYSTEMS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

2022 Seminar Series #5 – Decolonization and sustainable development: A critical approach

Monday 28th November 2022, 3:00pm – 4:30pm (EAT)

Venue: Online ([Zoom-Register](#))

About the webinar

Especially the development discourse is an extremely powerful long-run process inscribed into social structures and even culture and thus embedded into “Western” resp. “Northern” knowledge production – knowledge, which is not necessarily wrong, but unavoidably biased, especially against approaches from the Global South. Thus, it is of course always necessary to be critical about approaches of “development”, particularly those distinctly aiming at developing “the other”. In this context, the sustainable development goals of the United Nations (UN-SDGs) are a powerful tool of international development policy. Decreed in 2015 and targeted for 2030, they are reshaping the way how development is interpreted. They are often criticized (for diverse reasons) and also misunderstood (sometimes on purpose), and they are partly even self-contradictory. Still, necessary assistance may come with strings, also under the SDG umbrella. Hence, the SDGs are a controversial issue, embodying at the same time a traditional and thus at least partly “colonial” or “imperial” notion of development, while also at least potentially useful for decolonizing the problem. In the end, while they are different from earlier paradigms of development (be it modernization, structural adjustment, or poverty reduction), it remains to be clarified how exactly they are different and how important the difference is for actual processes and outcomes.

In the webinar, we will have three inputs from different angles setting the stage for a general discussion about the (de-)coloniality of the SDGs. Questions that may be addressed include:

- What is the basic character of the SDGs: more than old wine in new bottles with a fancy label? And who is framing the debate?
- Are the SDGs at least a tool for taming predatory capitalism? Or could they also be used for inspiring or even enabling more radical change? What could specifically be the role of the SDGs in the global fight against climate crisis?
- Generally, how much can the SDGs contribute to decolonizing the development discourse? What could be a larger context with respect to knowledge production in and from the Global South?



The people contributing



Andreas Exenberger is associate professor of economic and social history at the Faculty of Economics and Statistics of the University of Innsbruck, Austria. He is researching and teaching especially about global imbalances and the connection of institutional arrangements and development. He is also actively engaged in transfer activities of scientific insights to a broader public, including UniNETZ, the Austrian scholarly initiative to contribute to and accompany the implementation of the SDGs. He is participating in the Africa-Uninet-Project “Decolonising Knowledge and Learning Systems in the Global South” and will be chairing the webinar.



Susan Mlangwa is Deputy Country Director for Tanzania at The Clinton Health Access Initiative, and part time lecturer at the St. Augustine University, Graduate School Campus in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. She graduated from the University of Dar es Salaam and received her PhD in sociology from the University of Minnesota. In her work, that involves soliciting agency in people’s everyday life, she is combining her academic background and practical engagement with different groups of people by focusing on health issues and gender as well as climate change.



Judith Krauss is a lecturer at the University of York’s Department of Politics and Interdisciplinary Global Development Centre (IGDC), United Kingdom. Her post-doctoral research at the University of Sheffield’s Institute for Global Sustainable Development (IGSD) entailed work on convivial conservation, i.e. promoting justice, (bio)diversity and coexistence in conservation, livelihoods in Mozambique during Covid, and decolonial and justice-focused analysis particularly of the SDGs. One output was a co-authored article with Andrea Jiménez Cisneros and Marina Requena-i-Mora in *Sustainability Science*, mapping the economy-ecology SDGs 8, 9, 12, 13 and 15 through a decolonial lens.



Marcela Torres Heredia graduated from the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia, and the University of Vienna, Austria. Recently, she is doctoral researcher (DOC-team) at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Vienna, Austria. She is generally researching on the epistemological bases of knowledge production. Her dissertation project is navigating between colonial reproduction and social alternatives in the case of an Afro-Columbian women’s movement in the North-Cauca region, and she recently co-edited a volume of the Austrian *Journal of Development Policy* on (de-)coloniality.