

Knowledge Dependencies and the Un/Making of Equitable Futures

18 & 19 September, 2025

IDOS, Tulpenfeld 6, 53113 Bonn, Central Asia Conference Room

Conference Programme & Book of Abstracts

Jointly organised by the Cluster of Excellence the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies ([BCDSS](#)), University of Bonn & the German Institute of Development and Sustainability ([IDOS](#)), in partnership with the [Global Heritage Lab](#), University of Bonn

Amid escalating geopolitical instability, authoritarian retrenchments, and the deepening securitisation of knowledge-making, this conference critically examines how entrenched knowledge dependencies continue to shape practices of future-making—and how more equitable futures might still be (re)imagined. From the weaponisation of AI to the erosion of indigenous, activist, and academic freedoms, and the constraints of donor-driven agendas, we ask: How is knowledge circulation mediated? Under what conditions have alternative epistemic futures emerged—in the *longue durée* and within present formations?

For online participation, please register [here](#) by September 12, 2025.

Conference [webpage](#)

Pre-event, September 17, 16.00 –17.00

“[Decolonising epistemologies – A guided tour through the exhibition *Dressing Resistance. Fashion and the Heritage of Mission*](#)” led by **Jun. Prof. Dr. Julia Binter** and colleagues at the Global Heritage Lab, University of Bonn

Address: Global Heritage Lab @ P26 (1st floor), Poststraße 26, 53111 Bonn

Conference Programme

18 September (9.00 –17.30)

8:30	Registration opens, IDOS foyer
9.00 –9.30	Welcome and opening remarks by conference hosts & organizers, Anna-Katharina Hornidge (IDOS & University of Bonn) & Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa (BCDSS, University of Bonn & IDOS), & Dima Al-Munajed (BCDSS) with a discussion moderated by Prof. Dr. Ines Dombrowsky (IDOS)

9.30 –10.45	Keynote Address, Margarita Gómez , Southern Voice (Mexico City), Oxford University, and Autonomous University of Madrid "Equity in Research for Development: An Agenda for Collective Action" Moderator: Simone Christ (IDOS)
10.45-11.00	Coffee break
11.00–12.30	Workshop & Roundtable: "Decolonizing Knowledge within Institutions: Achievements, Barriers, and Collective Learning" – co-convened by IDOS & ZEF, University of Bonn. Chair: Niklas Wagner (University of Geneva & IDOS), with Hannah Ameye (ZEF, University of Bonn), Katharina Molitor (IDOS), Sarah-Lea Effert (IDOS), Monica van der Haagen-Wulff (University of Cologne), & Stephan Milich (University of Cologne)
12.30-13.15	Lunch break
13.15 –14.30	Keynote Address, Lisa Tilley , SOAS, University of London "Race, Value, Ecology and the Horizon of Liberation" Moderator: Sinah Kloß (BCDSS & Institute for Archaeology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Bonn)
14.30 –14.45	Coffee break
14.45 –16.00	Panel 1: "Fugitive Knowledges: Contesting the Institutions of Exclusion" , Chair: David B. Smith (Goethe University & BCDSS, University of Bonn)
14.45	Amisah Bakuri , Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam "Composing Otherwise: Ritual, Resistance, and the Remaking of Knowledge Futures"
15.00	Draga Gajić , Udruženje za kulturu, afirmaciju i savjetovanje (KAS), Banja Luka & the University of Novi Sad "Anti-gender Movements and Pushbacks against Diversity and Inclusion in the Western Balkans –The Future of Gender Studies"
15.15	Ari Ofengenden , Tulane University (online) "Climates of Fear: Academic Freedom, Dissent, and Dependencies in Illiberal Times"
15.30	Muhammad Uzair Hashmi , National University of Sciences and Technology of Pakistan (online) "Securitizing the Education Sector: The Paradox of Traditional versus Non-traditional Security in Pakistan"
15.45	Samuel Lazar , Department of Anthropology, Masaryk University "From Institutions to Inclusion: Challenges and Insights from Deinstitutionalization Efforts in Czech Republic and Slovakia"
16.00 –16.10	Coffee break

16.10 –17.30	Panel 2: “Curating Authority: Museums, Mobility, and Transnational Knowledge Intermediaries” Chairs: Asoka de Zoysa (University of Kelaniya) & Ganga Dissanayaka (NIAS)
16.10	Asoka de Zoysa , University of Kelaniya and Samkathana Research Center “Custodians of Temple Collections as Agents of Soft Power”
16.25	Heather Ahtone , First Americans Museum (online) “Weaving Responsibility: Reuniting Ancestral Knowledge Beyond Institutional Boundaries”
16.40	Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka , NIAS-NIOD-KITLV “Curating the Return: Sri Lankan Voices in Dutch Repatriation Dialogues”
16.55	Panggah Ardiyansyah , University of Sheffield “Whose Knowledge Returns?” Object Repatriation, Locality, and the Dependencies of Heritage Discourse in the Global South
17.10	Moumita Dhar , National Museum, New Delhi (online) “Situated Voices, Dislocated Objects: Disciplinary Hierarchies and the Indian Researcher in Europe”
17.25	Followed with brief commentary by Julia Binter (Global Heritage Lab, University of Bonn)
17.30	Closing remarks and announcements
19.00-21.00	Conference dinner for presenters, panel chairs, moderators & discussants

19 September (9.00 –17.00)

8.30	Registration opens (IDOS)
9.00	Welcome remarks
9.15 –10.30	Panel 3: “Unequal Geographies of Knowledge, Power and Development in a Climate-changed Future.” Chair: Lisa Schipper (Department of Geography, University of Bonn)
9.15	Dennis Schüpf , University of Bonn) & Jonas Hein , IDOS “Adapting to Uncertainty: Knowing Climate in Unpredictable Seas”

9.30	Johannes Dittmann , University of Bonn "Loss and Damage as Epistemic Rupture? Navigating Knowledge Dependencies in Climate Governance"
9.45	Abbie Yunita , Utrecht University "Repair as Ruination: Dutch Water Heritage in Jakarta"
10.00-10.30	Douwe van Schie , University of Bonn & UNU-EHS "The knowledge politics of climate change attribution: Evidence from Suriname" & open discussion
10.30 –10.45	Coffee break
10.45-11.45	Panel 4: "Narrating the Planet: Technonatures of Knowledge Dependency", Chair: Rachael Chan (SoGE, University of Oxford & BCDSS, University of Bonn)
10.45	Saymore Ngoni Kativu , IDOS "Making Futures with Past Mistakes – The Mutant Resurgence of the Green Revolution in Africa"
11.00	Tanvi Gujar , Museum Koenig, Bonn "Indigenous Gond Folktales: An Example of Integrating Narrative-based and Empiricist Knowledge-making"
11.15	Bebby Pane & Astrid Ningtyas Febriyanti , University of Gadj Mada (online) "Local Knowledge in the Recognition Trap: Participatory Claims and Technocratic Limits in Indonesia"
11.30	Julia Caroline Wummel , University of Cologne "Global Dependencies in Green Energy: Negotiating Kenya's Geothermal Futures"
11.45–12.45	Lunch break
12.45-14.15	Praxis Workshop: Veronica Cordova de la Rosa , independent artist-scholar, London & Mexico, "Beyond the mind: Embodied and alternative approaches to academic experience"
14.15 –14.30	Coffee break
14.30-15.15	Keynote Address, AbdouMaliq Simone , University of Sheffield "The Urban Technical", with facilitated discussion (online) Moderator: Irina Rafliana, Center for Life Ethics, University of Bonn
15.15 –15.30	Coffee break
15.30 –16.30	Panel 5: "Contours of the Possible: Reconfiguring Epistemic Futures from the Margins", Chair: Benjamin Etzold (BICC & BCDSS, University of Bonn)

15.30	Merdeka Saputra , University of Oldenburg "The obscura: Sonic, visual, and narrative ways of knowing human-seafloor entanglement in the anaesthetic world"
15.45	Arslan Waheed , Oxford School of Global and Area Studies & Pakistan Institute of Business Administration (online) "Contested Knowledges: Spatiotemporal Politics of Urban Epistemologies in Sustainability"
16.00	Rebecca Hofmann , University of Education-Freiburg "Aspiring refugees in German Universities: The un/making of a secure future through education"
16.15	Paride Bollettin , Masaryk University (online) "Collaborating with the Indigenous Mebengokré: Future academia and shared epistemologies"
16.30-17.00	Conference wrap-up

Abstracts & Speaker Bios | 18 September, 9:00–17:30

Keynote Address (9.30–10.45)

Margarita Gómez, Executive Director of Southern Voice, Mexico City

"Equity in Research for Development: An Agenda for Collective Action"

Moderator: Dr. Simone Christ (IDOS)

Despite growing recognition of the need for inclusive and locally grounded knowledge, the research for development ecosystem continues to reflect deep-rooted inequities—between institutions, geographies, and voices. This talk will unpack the current state of equity in global research partnerships and funding, highlighting the persistent asymmetries that shape whose knowledge counts and whose priorities prevail. The talk will explore three core questions: 1) Where do we stand today in terms of equity in research? 2) What kind of future are we striving for—and what would a more just and inclusive research ecosystem look like? and 3) What practical steps, partnerships, and systemic shifts are needed to get us there?

Drawing on experience from Southern Voice's work across over 70 think tanks in the Global South, the talk will close with a call to collective action—inviting researchers, funders, and institutions to rethink their roles and responsibilities in shaping a more equitable research for development agenda.

Margarita Gómez is Executive Director of Southern Voice, a network of over 70 think tanks from the Global South, amplifying research and policy influence globally. She founded Oxford University's People in Government Lab and previously led Mexico's first Behavioural Unit,

advising top government ministries. With over 12 years' experience in public sector transformation, her work spans women's participation, tackling corruption, and innovation. Margarita is a Visiting Fellow at Oxford University and Senior Research Fellow at the Autonomous University of Madrid. She advises the Asian Development Bank and the UN Scientific Advisory Board, and teaches globally on behavioural science, global development, and public policy and management.

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Workshop & Roundtable (11.00 – 12.30)

Chair: **Dr. Niklas Wagner (University of Geneva & IDOS)**, co-convened by the German Institute for Development and Sustainability (IDOS), the University of Cologne, and the Centre for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, together with **Dr. Hannah Ameye (ZEF)**, **Dr. Monica van der Haagen-Wulff (University of Cologne)**, & **Dr. Stephan Milich (University of Cologne)**

“Decolonizing Knowledge within Institutions: Achievements, Barriers, and Collective Learning”

11:00 – 11:45 | *Interactive Workshop*

Facilitated dialogue among all participants to reflect on institutional experiences of decolonising knowledge.

11:45 – 12:30 | *Panel Discussion*

Panellists synthesise insights from the workshop and reflect on them in light of their own institutional roles.

This session, jointly organised by the *Decolonizing Knowledge* groups at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) and the Center for Development Research (ZEF), invites conference participants to reflect on their experiences of advancing epistemic justice within structurally constrained environments.

The first part of the session will take the form of an interactive workshop in which participants collectively reflect on the past achievements, lessons learned, and institutional barriers encountered in their efforts to challenge colonial legacies in knowledge production. Drawing on experiences from decolonising knowledge groups at different research institutions, the workshop will foster an open and situated dialogue around shared challenges—such as reforming ethics protocols, confronting symbolic inclusion, sustaining critical engagement over time, and building coalitions within and beyond the academy.

In the second part of the session, a 45-minute panel will synthesize key insights emerging from the workshop to reflect on their own experiences of being members of decolonial initiatives across academic institutions. Panellists will discuss tensions between institutional commitments

to decolonisation and the structural dependencies that continue to shape academic practices, including the role of donor agendas, epistemic hierarchies, and governance norms. By creating a space for collective reflection and strategic exchange, the session aims not only to critique entrenched epistemic structures but to imagine actionable pathways toward more plural and just academic futures.

Dr. Niklas Wagner is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Geneva and the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). His research interests include knowledge co-production at the science-policy interface, power and legitimacy, and the politics of climate and development. He was a founding member of decolonizing knowledge and development initiatives at the both IDOS and at ZEF, University of Bonn.

Dr. Hannah Ameje is an interdisciplinary researcher focusing on nutrition security in Africa. She is specifically interested in the environments in which people make important dietary decisions and how patterns shift in response to both acute shocks—like extreme weather events—and longer-term structural changes, such as urbanizing food environments. She currently holds a senior researcher position at ZEF, Centre for Development Research, University of Bonn where she also teaches Development Economics and co-ordinates the Decolonizing Knowledge Group.

Sarah-Lea Effert works as Scientific Advisor the Directorate at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). She holds a MPhil in Political Theory from the University of Oxford and in her academic work has been focusing on global, historical, and structural (in)justice theorising. She is currently pursuing a PhD project on world citizens' quest for global non-domination.

Katharina Molitor is advisor to the IDOS Director for the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU). She holds a M.Sc. in Human Geography. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Cologne with experience in empirical fieldwork in Bangladesh. Her research interests are around the fields of agrarian livelihoods, food and nutrition security, critical studies of markets and practice theories.

Dr. Stephan Milich is a senior lecturer in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Institute of Languages and Cultures of the Islamicate World, University of Cologne. His research interests include modern Arabic literature, especially writings on prison, trauma and exile, decolonization, as well as critical cultural heritage studies. He has authored two monographs on contemporary Palestinian and Iraqi poetry, and is co-editor of three volumes: *Conflicting Narratives: War, Trauma and Memory in Modern Iraqi Culture* (2012), *Representations and Visions of Homeland in Arabic Literature* (2016), and *Creative Resistance: Political Humour in the Arab Uprisings* (2020), and a special issue on "Trauma: Social Realities and Cultural Texts". He is active in the Forum Decolonizing Academia (UoC) and recently habilitated on the topic of "Political Violence and Trauma in Contemporary Arabic Literature."

Dr. Monica van der Haagen-Wulff possesses a doctorate in Creative Arts (DCA), and is an Associate Lecturer at the Chair for Education and Cultural Sociology in the Department of Education and Social Sciences at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Cologne. Her teaching and research interests include: Cultural Studies, Postcolonial/Decolonial Feminist Theories, Intersectionality, Migration, Affect, Theories of Embodiment, Fictocritical Writing, and Historical Memory Studies. Monica has an intercultural dance and performance background and her main research focus is on how practice and theory can be merged to create new knowledges, and in so doing decentre Eurocentric knowledge constructions. She is interested in questions of critical heritage, exploring, in particular, the possibilities of embodied ways of understanding and remembering history. She considers Performance as part of her theoretical output and has performed in Australia and internationally.

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Keynote Address (13.15 –14.30)

Dr. Lisa Tilley, Senior Lecturer in Development Studies, School of African and Oriental Studies, University of London

“Race, Value, Ecology and the Horizon of Liberation”

Moderator: Dr. Sinah Kloß (BCDSS)

What does an ecology-centred materialist analysis bring to our understanding of knowledge dependencies and future-making? This talk explores this materialist angle by presenting racial capitalism as a *world ecological system* which structures the material and epistemic relations in which we are embedded. To illustrate this, it presents three broad provocations centred on the relationship between race/racialisation, valuation/cheapening, and ecology. Specifically, the talk addresses the question of how people, places, and natures are cheapened in the world capitalist system and to what ends? Finally, the question posed by the organisers of how we move beyond critique and towards transformative futures is addressed by engaging with horizons of liberation as envisaged through collective projects around alternative ecologies, food sovereignty, and structural change in the world racial capitalist system.

Dr. Lisa Tilley teaches Political Ecology and Political Economy at SOAS, University of London. Her research spans the socioecological dynamics of plantations and mines and the political economy of race, among other topics.

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Panel 1: Fugitive Knowledges: Contesting the Institutions of Exclusion (14.45 –16.00)

Chair: David Brandon Smith, Goethe University, Department of Protestant Theology & BCDSS, University of Bonn

Dr. Amisah Bakuri, School of Religion and Theology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
“Composing Otherwise: Ritual, Resistance, and the Remaking of Knowledge Futures”

Amidst ongoing geopolitical turbulence, the securitisation of knowledge, and a shrinking space for decolonial critique, this paper explores how Afro-Surinamese and Ghanaian diasporic actors in the Netherlands unsettle dominant epistemic hierarchies through fugitive cultural and religious rituals and performative practices. Drawing on 13 months of ethnographic research and framed by Black feminist theory, decolonial critique, and postcolonial anthropology, I argue that these diasporic lifeworlds, emerging at the intersection of religion, race, migration, and memory, constitute archives of resistance and speculative futures.

Engaging in practices and commemorations such as Keti Koti (breaking chains), libation rituals, Pentecostal services and deliverance, and participatory museum interventions demonstrate how Afro-diasporic communities generate alternative epistemologies that both mourn colonial violence and envision alternative futures. These embodied knowledges, often dismissed as folkloric, excessive, or exotic, operate as insurgent modes of theorising, refusing the capture of state-sanctioned multiculturalism and donor-driven inclusion agendas.

In place of extractive co-creation, I call for relational and pluriversal modes of engagement that centre African and diasporic epistemic traditions and knowledge systems on their own terms. This paper contributes to the growing body of work on epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2011), Black fugitivity (Moten and Harney, 2013), and incompleteness (Nyamnjoh, 2017), offering critical insights into how African diasporic actors improvise, resist, refuse, question and repair within and against the long afterlives of empire.

Dr. Amisah Bakuri is a postdoctoral research associate at the School of Religion and Theology at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on the complex intersections of religion, culture, and identity. She engages with debates surrounding

migration, sexuality, secularism and religion, situating these discussions within broader historical contexts, including colonialism and slavery. In her previous work, Amisah examined the structural and institutional dimensions of racism and medical ethics, with a particular emphasis on the lived experiences of ethnic minorities and Black communities in the Netherlands, Canada, and Ghana.

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Draga Gajić, Udruženje za kulturu, afirmaciju i savjetovanje (KAS) Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina & the University of Novi Sad

“Anti-gender movement and pushbacks against diversity and inclusion in the Western Balkans –The Future of Gender Studies”

Anti-gender movements are on the rise in the Western Balkans and globally. It affects not only the civil society but also academia. There is an evident lack of funds for feminist organizations and research projects that have a strong gender or feminist component. The talk explains anti-gender movement tendencies and pushbacks against diversity and inclusion in the Western Balkans, while focusing on the current status of Gender Studies at universities in the Western Balkans. Following the theoretical part of the presentation, the audience would be shortly divided into small groups and work on the assignment “The Future of Gender Studies”, to be integrated into the collective dialogue.

Draga Gajić is Executive Director of a girl-led and women-led organization Udruženje za kulturu, afirmaciju i savjetovanje “KAS” Banja Luka based in Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina). The organization works in the field of gender studies, gender equality, gender-based violence, gender, peace and conflict, feminist movement building, and gender-responsive education. She graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Banja Luka with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. She also possesses a double Masters in Gender Studies from the University of Novi Sad and in Political Science from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Banja Luka. Draga audited the graduate-level course “Gender Equality in the Nordic Countries” at the University of Oslo. Draga is presently pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of Novi Sad.

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Dr. Ari Ofengenden, Department of Jewish Studies, Tulane University, USA (online)

“Climates of Fear: Academic Freedom, Dissent, and Dependencies in Illiberal Times”

In my talk, I will analyze the silencing and prosecution of students at my university, as well as the broader climate of fear and repression that has been fostered by the administration. I will explore how mechanisms of institutional discipline have been mobilized to suppress dissenting voices, particularly those advocating for P*I*stinian rights or expressing political solidarity with

marginalized groups. Central to this analysis is the weaponization of accusations of anti-S*m*tism—a strategy that has been increasingly used to delegitimize criticism of Isr*eli policies and to stifle free speech on campus.

I argue that this trend is not isolated but part of a larger pattern: a co-ordinated attack on higher education by authoritarian and reactionary forces seeking to delegitimize the university as a space for critical inquiry, democratic engagement, and moral dissent. These forces exploit discourses of safety, civility, and national security to erode academic freedom, discredit progressive movements, and reshape the university in accordance with illiberal values. By drawing connections between these local dynamics and broader political shifts, my talk aims to illuminate how fascist tendencies are being normalized within educational institutions under the guise of neutrality, order, and protection.

Dr. Ari Ofengenden heads the Hebrew program at Tulane University. He earned his M.A. in cognitive psychology from Tel-Aviv University and his Ph.D. in Hebrew and Comparative Literature from Haifa University. He did his postdoc work at Tübingen University as well as in Monash. He is the author of *Liberalization and Culture in Contemporary Israel* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2018) and *Introduction to the Poetry of Abraham Shlonsky* (De Gruyter, 2014), as well as articles on Israeli culture and German-Jewish literature.

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***Muhammad Uzair Hashmi, Department of Government and Public Policy, National University of Sciences and Technology, Pakistan (online)**

“Securitizing the Education Sector: The Paradox of Traditional versus Non-traditional Security in Pakistan”

This study examines how Pakistan’s security apparatus shapes the education sector, revealing a paradox between national security and educational equity. Drawing on Securitization Theory and the concept of regime security, it explores how state elites deploy discursive and institutional practices to embed national security priorities within curricula, pedagogy, and institutional norms. This securitized approach produces epistemic dependency, limiting education’s transformative potential and reinforcing ideological conformity. Marginalized groups—particularly ethnic, religious, and economically disadvantaged communities—are disproportionately affected, as securitized narratives suppress critical inquiry and entrench exclusion. Addressing key gaps in existing literature, the research investigates the long-term consequences of securitized education, including ideological conditioning and self-censorship, and highlights the lack of comparative perspectives. It proposes strategies for desecuritizing higher education through inclusive curriculum reform, protection of academic freedom, and critical pedagogy. In doing so, the study contributes to understanding how knowledge hierarchies are sustained—and how they can be dismantled to support equitable and inclusive futures.

Muhammad Uzair Hashmi is Head of the Department of Government and Public Policy at NUST, Islamabad. His research explores the securitization of public policy and knowledge systems in Pakistan. Moreover, he has also worked on how infrastructure and service delivery, particularly through public-private partnerships (PPPs), are securitized under the political economy of the state. Hashmi has held multiple national consultancies and academic fellowships, and advocates for desecuritization strategies that reclaim public goods and knowledge for equitable and inclusive futures.

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Samuel Lazar, Department of Anthropology, Masaryk University,
“From Institutions to Inclusion: Challenges and Insights from Deinstitutionalization Efforts in Czech Republic and Slovakia”

This talk presents fieldwork experiences with people labelled as “disabled” in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, with a particular focus on the role of institutions working with them. It explores how the process of deinstitutionalization—shifting from institutional care to support that enables individuals to remain in their social environments—accounts for the perspectives of key social actors: people labelled as “disabled,” caregivers, and social workers. Institutionalization has historically functioned, and continues to function as a structural barrier to inclusion. In turn, the lack of inclusivity reinforces social exclusion, devaluing the roles of these individuals as holders of embodied knowledge. This knowledge becomes marginalized, producing a state of knowledge dependency.

Drawing on over seven years of volunteering with a foundation focused on inclusion and social rehabilitation, the speaker examines grassroots efforts by caregivers, social workers, and facility directors to deinstitutionalize care and preserve social environments. The central argument of the talk is that while initiatives toward inclusion through deinstitutionalization are growing, they remain under-recognized in both public policy and wider public discourse. More attention is needed to support inclusive futures that centre the knowledge and agency of marginalized individuals.

Samuel Lazar’s experience working with people labelled as “disabled” started in 2017, when they volunteered in a foundation focused on social rehabilitation and inclusion. Since his Bachelor’s work in 2023, he has been conducting research in disability studies, mainly with people labeled as “disabled”, alongside social workers and caregivers. He is presently a Masters student at the Department of Anthropology at Masaryk University in Brno, where he continues his research in disability studies and work with people typically labeled as “disabled.”

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Panel 2: Curating Authority: Museums, Mobility, and Transnational Knowledge Intermediaries (16.10–17.30)

Chairs: Prof. Dr. Asoka de Zoysa (University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka) & Dr. Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka (Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and the Social Sciences)

In international museological practice, the epistemic authority to define, translate, and circulate knowledge is increasingly shaped by transnational networks. This session critically interrogates how curatorial practice, museum diplomacy, and international collaborations reinforce and subvert epistemic authority. While museums like to imagine that they are sites of neutrality, they are firmly embedded within global hierarchies that favour particular possessors of knowledge—most particularly those who are located in Euro-North American institutions—over others.

We are also interested in practice that centres community and deconstructs dominant museum narratives. Reunions of ancestral objects with descendant communities, like recent initiatives involving the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, present powerful models for rethinking ownership, care, and accountability. These practices also have a tendency to exceed institutional boundaries, producing new relational ethics and responsibilities that challenge colonial collecting and exhibition habits. This panel finally brings together a number of self-reflexive questions: Who curates, for whom, and on what terms in a transnational context? How could new curatorial models—particularly those deriving from community-led restitution processes or from beyond the formal museum training process—trouble current regimes of epistemic dominance and enable more plural, inclusive modes of knowledge creation and dissemination?

Asoka de Zoysa (University of Kelaniya and Samkathana Research Center, Sri Lanka)
“Custodians of Temples as Agents of Soft Power”

New research pathways in *Theravāda* Buddhist studies have emerged with the discovery of private collections in temples and monastic libraries of Sri Lanka. The custodian-monks wield a form of soft power over their collections that are richer than those in state museums. These collections are barely known. Their object histories are fragmented and remain isolated within the respective temples. We question what these temple-held artifacts—such as ritual objects and rare manuscripts—tell us today.

These artifacts entailed not only written documents with regal seals, but ceremonial fans, alms bowls, robes (*vijīnī patra*, *pātra*, *cīvara*), and *Kamma Vāca* texts. These objects were dispatched with delegations of monks who held ordination rights and traversed the Bay of Bengal in the 18th to 19th century. They represented the *Theravāda* Buddhist tradition of “*Upasampadā* Diplomacy” between Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Sri Lanka and were sent for and received on invitation of the respective kings (Blackburn 2010). Rulers of Arakan, Bago (Pegu), Amarapura, Mandalay, Ayutthaya, Bangkok and Kandy sent envoys across the Bay of Bengal to

ensure amicable relationships in spite of territorial wars fought between kings and provincial rulers of South-East Asia, not forgetting resisting Western powers. Their manuscripts traversed the seas over four centuries carrying narratives, iconographies and recitation practices between Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia revealing complex political networks based on *Upasampadā* diplomacy. Their local deviations enable the tracing of different time periods of ordination.

Prof. Dr. Asoka de Zoysa trained at the Institut für Indische Philologie und Kunstgeschichte in Berlin, specializing in Sanskrit, Pali, and hybrid-Hindi texts with a focus on Indian and Himalayan art. His Ph.D., *Blutrünstige Braminen am heiligen Strome* (1997), critiques 18th–19th century European representations of India in German, French, and British opera and theatre. He later worked at Berlin’s Museum für Indische Kunst, curating lectures on Indian art. Since 1997, he has taught at the University of Kelaniya, where he leads the German Studies programme and directs the Samkathana Research Centre. His current research explores Buddhist temple art, Hindu-Buddhist iconography, colonial heritage, and Sri Lankan art in global contexts. He is part of the 2023 PPROCE-Netherlands research team, contributing to debates on museum collections and repatriation.

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Dr. Heather Ahtone (First Americans Museum, USA)

“Weaving Responsibility: Reuniting Ancestral Knowledge Beyond Institutional Boundaries”

This presentation addresses the curatorial implications of the repatriation of Indigenous cultural items to their communities, emphasizing community-initiated projects and how they affect the reframing of institutional responsibility. Grounded in recent experimentation in Native American and First Nations collaborations, particularly within the Smithsonian Institution and National Museum of the American Indian, I consider how curatorial authority is remapped through relational ethics, communal answerability, and land-based knowledge. These reunions exceed the limits of institutional practice, often foregrounding spiritual, ecological, and intergenerational dimensions of care that destabilize colonial curatorial hierarchies. The article argues for an expanded understanding of stewardship and curatorial responsibility, one that is receptive to the mobile fluidity of knowledge and welcomes descendant voices not merely as contributors but as co-curators, caretakers, and epistemic authorities.

Dr. Heather Ahtone is Director of Curatorial Affairs at the First Americans Museum (FAM) in Oklahoma City, where she leads the development of inaugural exhibitions for the 175,000-square-foot facility dedicated to the histories, cultures, and arts of the 39 Tribes of Oklahoma.

A citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and descendant of strong Choctaw women, Ahtone has worked in the Native arts community since 1993, including positions at the Institute of American Indian Arts Museum, Southwestern Association of Indian Arts, and Ralph Appelbaum Associates. She holds undergraduate degrees in Creative Writing and Printmaking and earned her Ph.D. in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus on Art History, Anthropology, and Native American Studies. Ahtone's research and curatorial practice center on Indigenous epistemologies, contemporary Native art, and the evolution of tribal design. Her work champions community-centered exhibitions and a decolonial approach to American art history.

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Dr. Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka (NIAS-NIOD-KITLV)

“Curating the Return: Sri Lankan Voices in Dutch Repatriation Dialogues”

This talk entails a reflective piece on the negotiation of curatorial and academic authority in the context of the Dutch–Sri Lankan restitution process, of 17th–18th-century collections in Dutch museums. I discuss curatorial tensions in transnational partnerships among scholarly expertise, government policy, and local stakeholders in Sri Lanka by re-examining case studies such as the Lewke Cannon and returned sword and guns artefacts in Colombo. From my own background as a heritage researcher and a cultural mediator, I critically unpack how Sri Lankan scholars and artists are incorporated into Dutch museum spaces to narrate the 'local' voice, typically within frameworks that still privilege Eurocentric museology. The paper demands collaborative models of restitution that address asymmetries of present curatorial agency, prioritize community ownership, and a collective authorship of the past.

Dr. Ganga Rajinee Dissanayaka is an ethnographer and art historian specialising in material culture, museum and heritage studies, and participatory research. She is presently a fellow at the NIAS-NIOD-KITLV program *Moving Objects, Mobilising Culture*, deepening her research on transnational heritage flows and curatorial authority in postcolonial contexts. Her work explores the provenance of Sri Lankan objects in museum collections and bridges diverse knowledge systems beyond conventional museum spaces. Her current research focuses on the social and political dimensions of 17th-century Sri Lankan art, especially around Trincomalee Harbour's ties to East Asia, as well as the transformation of urban Colombo through land–sea (Track and Thalassic) networks. A published author and documentary filmmaker, Ganga has contributed to World Bank heritage projects and is part of the PPROCE-Netherlands team. She is actively engaged in debates on repatriation, restitution, and museum decolonization, and serves on the Netherlands' NWA Assessment Committee (2023–2024), while also co-developing a history education guide using museum artefacts.

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Dr. Panggah Ardiyansyah (University of Sheffield, UK)

“Whose Knowledge Returns?” Object Repatriation, Locality, and the Dependencies of Heritage Discourse in the Global South

This presentation considers how knowledge is created and presented in the *Repatriasi* (Repatriation) exhibition at the National Museum of Indonesia. It reflects a broader pattern: when cultural objects are returned to their countries of origin, they are often used to support national stories of historical greatness. But I want to ask a different question—can these exhibitions also help us think more deeply about how local communities relate to these objects? What does it mean for something to be “owned” or “belong” locally? To explore this, I focus on what happens when objects are returned “home,” and what this tells us about the spaces and time periods they are reinserted into—especially in terms of how we preserve heritage today. Understanding local contexts today isn’t as simple as treating them as unchanging traditions. Instead, these are dynamic spaces where meanings are constantly being shaped through everyday interactions and formal heritage practices. Taking inspiration from anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1995), I treat “locality” not as a fixed place but as something actively created through relationships and experiences. This leads to a key question: when we say we are preserving local heritage, what version of “local” are we really preserving? Can national and local stories truly coexist, or are we just using their conflict to create meaning without really resolving it? Are we, perhaps, celebrating “alternative” narratives while still depending on the same dominant systems we claim to challenge?

Through answering these questions, I aim to reflect on my own positionality as both an Indonesian national and a scholar embedded within transnational academic and heritage networks. This hybrid perspective holds the potential to enable a critical engagement with prevailing paradigms of state-led repatriation in the Global South and opens space to imagine more reflexive and equitable frameworks for cultural restitution and heritage interpretation.

Dr. Panggah Ardiyansyah is a Research Associate in Digital Humanities at the University of Sheffield, focusing on digital mediations of colonial collections in relation to restitution issues. He completed his Ph.D. at SOAS University of London on the field of Southeast Asian art history and archaeology, with particular interests in modern historiography, knowledge production and decolonising perspectives. Panggah is also an academic team member of Getty-funded research project *Circumambulating Objects: On Paradigms of Restitution of Southeast Asian Art* (CO-OP). Starting from September 2025, he is a fellow of the NIAS-NIOD-KITLV *Moving objects, Mobilising Culture in the Context of (De)colonisation*, working on a research project titled *Evocative Fragments: Archaeological Knowledge Production for Sendang Duwur and Its Dispersed Objects*. During this fellowship, he aims to investigate the heritage politics in Indonesia, especially in relation to identity formation, inclusion/exclusion, and restitution frameworks.

Moumita Dhar (National Museum, New Delhi)**“Situated Voices, Dislocated Objects: Disciplinary Hierarchies and the Indian Researcher in Europe”**

This talk addresses the epistemic location of Global South scholars—Indian scholars, in this case—in European museum collaborations that engage with colonial-era collections. Based on my own experience of collaboration with South Asian objects in Dutch and German museums, I consider how curatorial agency is passed on, exchanged, or withheld in transnational research networks. Often invoked to 'represent' Indigenous or local knowledge, Global South scholars negotiate a tightrope where institutional framing overshadows critical agency. Drawn upon feminist and postcolonial theory, I question the terms under which our knowledge is legitimized, referenced, and disseminated. I argue that transnational museum practice may reproduce colonial epistemic hierarchies unless it critically analyses the positioning—and repositioning—of knowledge intermediaries across borders. The paper calls for “curatorial models of equivalence” that recognize multiple knowledges as coeval, rather than subsidiary.

Moumita Dhar is a curator at the National Museum, New Delhi, with academic training in archaeology and museology. Her professional work bridges curatorial practice, research, and writing, with a particular interest in the colonial histories of South Asian collections. She is actively involved in editing and publishing scholarly papers, contributing to both institutional projects and her own academic research. Moumita’s work explores the intersections of museum collections, cultural memory, and decolonial knowledge production. She brings a critical perspective to the role of Indian curators in international networks, advocating for greater inclusion of Global South voices in shaping museum narratives and restitution dialogues.

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Discussant – Prof. Dr. Julia Binter, is the Argelander Professor for Critical Museum and Heritage Studies at the University of Bonn and Deputy Director of the Global Heritage Lab, Bonn. A social anthropologist with a background in theatre, film, and media studies, she specialises in material culture, critical museum, and heritage studies. Her work spans transdisciplinary collaborations with artists, activists, and cultural institutions, focusing on the colonial entanglements of museums and the plural knowledge practices surrounding collections. She has conducted research in Nigeria, Namibia, Germany, and the UK, exploring how heritage is negotiated across visual arts, performance, fashion, and everyday ritual. She co-leads two major projects: *Confronting Colonial Pasts, Envisioning Creative Futures* (Gerda Henkel Foundation) and *Artistic Research and Communal Knowledge* (Heinrich Böll Foundation), both centred on restitution and collaborative knowledge-making in Namibia. Her current research lines include *The Heritage of Mission*, investigating missionary collections and decolonial futures, and *Heritage Ecologies*, which explores biodiversity, care, and colonialism in botanic gardens.

Abstracts & Speaker Bios | 19 September, 9:00–17:00

Panel 3: Unequal geographies of knowledge, power, and development in a climate-changed future (9.15 –10.30)

Chair: Prof. Dr. Lisa Schipper, Department of Geography, University of Bonn, Germany-Netherlands, Indonesia-Suriname

Scientists and policymakers worldwide accept that there are large knowledge gaps on climate change. Yet they are less willing to acknowledge that the current state of knowledge favours certain epistemic models over others, meaning that what we think we know is likely skewed toward Cartesian natural science carried out by white scientists in the Global North, therefore in some cases telling the wrong story. This panel brings together five papers that examine how knowledge dependencies shape research, governance, and development as climate breakdown unfolds. By engaging with themes of postcolonial legacies, institutional dependencies, and plural epistemologies, the panel critically examines the dominant modes of ways of knowing, the actors producing this knowledge, and how these modes are shaping a future with climate change. The papers span diverse geographies, including evidence from India, Indonesia and Suriname. Together, they examine how institutional and epistemic inequalities marginalise local(ised) knowledge and wisdom gained from the lived experience. We invite a critical discussion on how scholars and institutions can move beyond extractive practice, towards pluriversal pathways for knowing that can lead to a more equitable future with climate change.

Prof. Dr. Lisa Schipper is a Professor for Development Geography at the University of Bonn. The focus of her research is what causes people to be vulnerable to climate change in the Global South, and the barriers and enablers for people to adapt to the changes in climate. She is particularly interested in socio-cultural dimensions of vulnerability, including gender, culture and religion, as well as structural issues related to power, justice and equity. She co-led the IPCC 2022 chapter on climate resilient development.

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Dennis Schüpff (Uni Bonn), with Dr. Jonas Hein (IDOS)

“Adapting to Uncertainty: Knowing Climate in Unpredictable Seas”

Along the south-eastern coast of India, hard infrastructure such as seawalls and groins has become the predominant response to hazards such as erosion and cyclones. This paper interrogates how knowledge about coastal dynamics is produced, contested and legitimised, revealing deep epistemic injustices between technocratic models and traditional fishing cosmologies. Based on ethnographic research with engineers, policymakers and artisanal fishers, we unravel how uncertainty and 'situated knowledges' shape coastal protection. We argue that dominant responses often marginalise local knowledges, thereby reinforcing post-colonial scientific legacies that have drastic socio-spatial implications for beach commons used by artisanal fishers. By foregrounding uncertainty and knowledge politics, we demonstrate how embracing plural epistemologies can disrupt intertwined power relations and foster more just climate futures. This study contributes to debates on climate change adaptation by highlighting the need to move beyond technocratic fixes and towards approaches that recognise the diverse ways of knowing an increasingly unpredictable sea.

Dennis Schüpff is a PhD candidate at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). His work focuses on environmental governance, climate adaptation, and resource politics, with research experience in India and Kenya. He examines issues like sand mining, coastal erosion, and the marginalisation of fishing communities.

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Dr. Johannes Dittmann, University of Bonn

“Loss and Damage as Epistemic Rupture? Navigating Knowledge Dependencies in Climate Governance”

In recent years, loss and damage (L&D) has become central in global climate governance. The establishment of the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage in 2022 and its operationalisation at COP29 in 2024, mark key successes for Global South advocates. Yet, L&D risks being absorbed into institutional frameworks that have historically diluted the transformative potential of adaptation. This paper traces the conceptual evolution of adaptation and L&D within the UNFCCC, showing how both have been shaped by discourses

of risk, vulnerability, and resilience. Drawing on critical development studies, we argue that constructive ambiguity enables flexible but often depoliticised interpretations. As adaptation has merged with development agendas, L&D's justice-driven roots face similar risks. We critique knowledge and institutional dependencies and call for reconceptualising L&D as a political and epistemic project centring affected communities and enabling a radical reimagining of justice and authority in climate governance.

Dr. Johannes Dittmann is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer in Development Geography at the Geographical Institute of the University of Bonn. His focus areas include development, human geography, and political ecology of Southern, Eastern, and Western Africa. His current research examines the circularity of models for development, conservation and adaptation to climate change between Africa and Europe.

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Dr. Abbie Yunita, Utrecht University

“Repair as Ruination: Dutch Water Heritage in Jakarta”

Discussions on climate change and cultural heritage often focus on two key questions: how climate change affects heritage, and how heritage can help address it. This paper shifts attention to a specific form of heritage now used to repair landscapes it once damaged. Drawing on archival research in the Netherlands and Jakarta, I examine how Dutch memories of exceptionalism frame their water management expertise - rooted in a history of controlling 'unruly' water - as vital for climate adaptation in delta regions across the globe. I then explore manifestations of this heritage in Jakarta, where this heritage-cum-expertise is implicated in both the colonial ruination still unfolding in the urban terrain as well as the efforts to reimagine and repair the city's future. Considering repair and ruination as a coupled trajectory not only reveals the enduring afterlife of colonialism in the making of uneven delta futures. It also renders visible the occluded ruins and ruination that can challenge knowledge dependencies to make other futures possible.

Dr. Abbie Yunita is a postdoctoral researcher at Utrecht University. Her work explores the discursive, practical and material aspects of sustainable development schemes through a historical, political economy, political ecology and aesthetics lens. Her current research investigates articulations of cultural heritage and climate change in Indonesia and the Netherlands: the narratives/images that mediate meanings of heritage, their place in climate adaptation and mitigation, and their implications on how cultural heritage is valued, practised and governed. She is also interested in the (material) culture of finance and the entanglement between sustainable development and financialisation, particularly in Indonesia

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Douwe van Schie (University of Bonn; UNU-EHS)

“The knowledge politics of climate change attribution: Evidence from Suriname”

This paper examines diverging claims surrounding the cause of the 2022 flood in Suriname, during which the historically marginalised Saramaka Maroons, living downstream of the Afobaka Dam, were inundated for three months. The Surinamese state, including the state-owned company that manages the dam since 2020, attributes this flooding to climate change. However, residents affected by the floods invoke narratives of mismanagement, malpractice and malice to explain the cause. The analysis of these diverging interpretations, based on interviews with various actors and news article analyses, sheds light on the historical power inequalities between the state and Maroon societies in Suriname, the resulting epistemic fractures across Surinamese society, and its relevance in the era of climate change. Through this case study, I explore whose knowledge counts in narratives on climate change attribution, how climate change can obscure the underlying causes of vulnerability that lead to disasters, and how this can inhibit restitution and an equitable future.

Douwe van Schie is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Bonn. His research is a multi-scalar analysis of social inequalities and loss and damage, starting in Suriname and ending at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He explains this by using concepts such as capabilities, intersectionality, and marronage. Douwe’s previous research focussed on so-called “non-economic losses and damages” and the framing of intangible losses related to climate change, with Bangladesh as a case study.

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Panel 4: Narrating the Planet: Technonatures and Knowledge Dependencies (10.45 –11.45)

Chair: Rachael Chan, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford & BCDSS, University of Bonn

Saymore Ngoni Kativu, German Institute of Development and Sustainability (Bonn)

“Making Futures with Past Mistakes – The Mutant Resurgence of the Green Revolution in Africa”

The Green Revolution, once heralded as a global agricultural success story, continues to mutate and resurge across space and time. Evidence shows that it has been long resurging across Africa, institutionally, discursively and materially in development models including agricultural growth corridors, like the Southern Africa Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT). This is owed to many reasons, not in the least renewed technocratic optimism for modernity, food security

and rural and agrarian prosperity through agricultural commercialization of especially subsistent smallholder farmers. Drawing from empirical research in Tanzania's SAGCOT and Namibia's Zambezi Region, I critique the knowledge dependencies embedded in contemporary agricultural intensification models that privilege yield-maximization over biodiverse agroecological systems. I argue that these futures are path-dependent, drinking from the past Green Revolution, tethered to Eurocentric models of development, and sustained by epistemic hierarchies that marginalize local indigenous, pluralistic agricultural knowledges.

To concretize my argument, I examine how demonstration fields, demo plots, corridor agriculture, and policy framings territorialize input-intensive, monoculture futures while rendering agroecological alternatives invisible. Drawing on assemblage theory and critical political ecology, I expose how these demonstration fields become performative theatres of techno-fix success, masking dispossession, ecological risk, and knowledge erasure. I further introduce the concept of *epistemic voids*, the structured absence of agricultural epistemic resources beyond just knowledges, that smallholder farmers face in envisioning and enacting alternative futures. I argue that these epistemic voids open up spaces that path-dependent intensification has both material and discursive power to fill over its alternative counterparts that advocate for conservation-oriented transformation and development of socioecological systems. I conclude by arguing that the discursive and materiality of the ongoing African Green Revolution does not operate on clean slate, but is somewhat a palimpsest layered with past mistakes, repurposed under the guise of modernity. In its current form, it marginalizes local epistemologies, ecological interdependencies and resultantly plural, decolonial reimagination and production of agrarian futures, where the past mistakes of agrarian revolutions are inherited.

Saymore Ngoni Kativu is an emerging hybrid leader, researcher, development practitioner, seasoned multimedia communicator with a keen interest on the science-policy-practice interface as a pathway to sustainable futures. Ngoni is currently finalizing his Ph.D. in Sociology at the intersection of Science and Technology Studies, and Rural Agrarian Development and Sustainable Futures.

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Tanvi Gujar, Museum Koenig, Bonn

"Indigenous Gond Folktales: An Example of Integrating Narrative-based and Empiricist Knowledge-making"

Folktales are compendia of socio-cultural dynamics as they offer a window into the processes of knowledge creation and of acculturation. Despite this, environmental studies have long been dominated by a scientific methodology that is quantitative and focuses on text-based knowledge documentation thus, disenfranchising the scientific wisdom contained in traditional knowledge systems. This asymmetrical epistemological representation urgently calls for engaging with narrative-based phenomena to validate their scientific robustness and establish them as robust surrogates of quantitative science. This article will therefore discuss the role of Gond folk narratives as tools of self-actualization and acculturation. By dissecting Gond narratives, I will identify different processual elements through which knowledge is co-

constituted. Specifically, I will identify cultural markers of sustainable land and resource use from narrativized cultural practices of the Gonds. Positioning folktales as socio-ecological stewards will allow me to explore how the encoding of knowledge can affect land management by different communities. Exploring the methodological coherence of a narratives-based science through a historiographic study of the socio-ecological practices of the Gonds will thus contribute reflexive thinking which could make quantitative science more equitable.

Tanvi Gujar graduated from the University of Bonn, with a research focus in socio-ecological land restoration practices. Her Master's thesis explored the restoration of German mining sites and their herpetofaunal diversity while foregrounding local knowledge in land restoration practices. Her previous work with diverse ethnic groups in India revealed how varied traditional knowledge systems shape in the conservation of cultural cognitive phenomena that in turn informed ecosystem management. Her core work also involves the creation of platforms for holders of rich traditional knowledge systems that have been central to ecosystem management, whilst working towards her own doctoral research.

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Bebby Pane & Astrid Ningtyas Febriyanti, University of Gadjra Mada, Indonesia (online)

“Local Knowledge in the Recognition Trap: Participatory Claims and Technocratic Limits in Indonesia”

This paper criticizes the epistemic hierarchies embedded in global climate governance by examining how technocratic, standardized approaches to environmental certification (Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil and Marine Stewardship Council) can lead to maladaptive outcomes when applied without considering the social realities. Drawing on James Scott's critique of high-modernist state planning and Anna Tsing's work on resource frontiers, the paper explores how international schemes, if designed with only formalized environmental standards, can potentially marginalize indigenous and local knowledge whilst these schemes hold potential to also leverage such practices.

Through qualitative case studies of certification and risk assessment frameworks in the palm and marine sector, this research examines how the formalization of knowledge, which is often framed as “participatory”, can end up reinforcing unequal dynamics. While community knowledge is increasingly acknowledged in policy discourse, its value is often measured against external standards, limiting how it is understood and applied. Rather than being treated as a dynamic and political form of expertise, local knowledge is frequently positioned as supplementary. This constrained recognition risks narrowing the space for communities to assert their own epistemologies and priorities, and may result in interventions that do not fully reflect or respond to the lived realities of frontline communities. By grounding these dynamics in the politics of recognition, this paper reflects on how local and Indigenous knowledge systems are engaged within global climate governance not as autonomous frameworks, but often as forms of input that require validation by dominant epistemic norms. This constrained

recognition limits the ability of communities to define their own knowledge terms and priorities. By focusing on how recognition is granted, negotiated, or withheld, this study contributes to broader efforts to reimagine climate governance as a site of epistemic justice and not merely technical inclusion.

Beby Pane is a researcher in marine policy and local governance who focused on the integration of IPLCs environmental management within state policy and documentation of their respective knowledge on marine and coastal areas.

Astrid Febriyanti is a researcher in forestry and sustainable commodities who focuses on IPLCs inclusion in international environmental standards.

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Julia Caroline Wummel, Energy Futures Project, University of Cologne
“Global Dependencies in Green Energy: Negotiating Kenya’s Geothermal Futures”

In Kenya’s geothermal sector, visions of the future are often influenced by transnational networks of experts as well as donor agendas. Exchanges of Kenyan scientists and engineers with experts from countries such as Iceland, Japan, and Germany often prioritise electricity generation for national and global markets - framing 'green futures' in terms of hydrogen, ammonia, or data centres. These imaginaries are underpinned by epistemic hierarchies that privilege certain ideas, while silencing others. Drawing on ethnographic research, this paper explores how long-standing relations of expertise shape which futures are considered imaginable. At the same time, Kenyan professionals negotiate, contest, and expand these futures by pursuing practices beyond dominant narratives. Visions that diverge from the imperative of 'powering the nation' - channelling electricity to urban centres - often emphasize the direct uses of geothermal heat, such as pasteurising milk, heating greenhouses, and drying grain. They also include more commercial applications, for instance the development of saunas and spas. Such practices promise not only to ease daily burdens on rural communities but also to create new opportunities for leisure and tourism. While these imaginaries are rooted in personal and often gendered histories of labour, they are also inspired by projects that the experts have seen in other countries. This paper contributes to debates on the global entanglements of green energy transitions by examining how techno-scientific experts strive for more equitable and decentralized futures.

Julia Caroline Wummel is in the final phase of completing her Ph.D. project in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Cologne. As part of the “Energy Futures” project within the Collaborative Research Centre “Future Rural Africa”, her work explores the co-production of knowledge, travelling ideas, and inequalities within transnational communities, particularly in the context of green energy expertise in East Africa.

Praxis Workshop (12.30 –14.00)

Dr. Veronica Cordova de La Rosa, independent artist-scholar, London & Mexico City

“Beyond the Mind: Embodied and alternative approaches to knowledge making”

This workshop invites academics into a multi-sensory, participatory space to reflect on the ethical, embodied, and relational dimensions of performance as research, and research as performance. Set within an artist-designed environment, the workshop disrupts the norms of conventional academic spaces, laboratories, conference rooms, classrooms, by encouraging different actions, presence, and ways of being. Participants will be invited to move at their own pace and discover their own modes of engagement.

Through prompts drawn from academic texts on positionality, vulnerability, and legitimacy in research practice, we will explore questions such as:

- How do we know when we are doing research?
- How do we recognise ourselves as both subjects and objects of research?
- How can we tell when something has been understood or absorbed through the body rather than solely through thought?

This is an invitation to reimagine academic experience as something more body-aware, gentler on the senses, and open to alternative modes of knowledge-making.



Dr. Veronica Córdoba de la Rosa is an artist-scholar with a Ph.D. in Contemporary Arts (Practice-based) from Oxford Brookes University, UK. Her practice sits at the intersection of creative research, critical pedagogy, and social resistance. Her work explores how knowledge is produced and processed in the studio space, seeking artistic growth and alternative ways of thinking—both within the university and beyond.

Veronica creates paintings, risograph prints, performance artworks, and their documentation, working both independently and in collaboration with people of all ages, abilities, and

persuasions. Her artistic process identifies, names, and transforms symbolic violence, as well as patriarchal and racist structures, into artworks that actively resist their effects on herself and others. Her practice often challenges conventional norms, occasionally shocking viewers and pushing the limits of what is deemed acceptable. She believes in the emancipatory power of drawing, painting, dancing, collective performance, and community-based art practices to support the liberation of BIPOC artists from coercive and racist environments. For Veronica, art can be both a joyful, collaborative process and a rigorous form of research. Her work is reproducible, striking, and unmistakably contemporary. Veronica has performed in museums, schools of art, theatres, embassies, and rivers, as well as in empty, smelly rooms and historic manor houses. Her performances have unfolded across borders and have been featured in international performance art festivals in China, Japan, Mexico, Finland, and Cyprus.

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Keynote Address (14.15 –15.15)

Prof. Dr. AbouMaliq Simone, University of Sheffield (online)

“The Urban Technical”, with a facilitated informal coffee discussion

Moderator: Dr. Irina Rafliana, Centre for Life Ethics, University of Bonn

How to restore attention to the *technical* capacities of those for whom such capacities were occluded or effaced? And what is the technical for those whose urban-making and engaging practices extend beyond normative vernaculars. Technicities orchestrate intersections. Intersections produce multiple perspectives, where everything that exists is being recalibrated, repositioned in their relationships with each other because they are constantly being worked out and engaged by people and materials who are themselves continuously similar and different by virtue of these intersections. Inhabitation is always on the move, creating particular kinds of space where people, with their devices, resources, tools, imaginations, and techniques, are always acting on each other, pushing and pulling, folding in and leaving out, making use of whatever others are doing, paying attention to all that is going on, fighting, manipulating and collaborating. How do these constitute urban knowledge?

Prof. Dr. AbdouMaliq Simone is Senior Professorial Fellow Emeritus at the Urban Institute, University of Sheffield; co-director of the Beyond Inhabitation Lab, Polytechnic University of Turin; and Fellow at Humanity’s Urban Future, Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. He also holds visiting and research affiliations in Cape Town and Jakarta. His work focuses on spatial composition in extended urban regions, the everyday lives of urban majorities in the Global South, infrastructural imaginaries, global blackness, and Muslim working-class histories. Over the past three decades, Simone has examined how African and Southeast Asian cities are inhabited—through social exchange, local economies, and shifting power relations. His applied

work includes remaking municipal systems, training local officials, and fostering collaborations among residents, artists, technicians, and politicians. Across these efforts, he seeks to build institutions that can engage the complexity of life in the "majority world" and uncover hidden forms of collective life and urban resilience.

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Panel 5: Contours of the Possible: Reconfiguring Epistemic Futures from the Margins (15.30 –16.30)

Chair: Dr. Benjamin Etzold, Bonn International Center for Conflict Studies (BICC) & BCDSS, University of Bonn

Dr. Merdeka Saputra (University of Oldenburg, Germany)

"The Obscura: Sonic, visual, and narrative ways of knowing human-seafloor entanglement in the anaesthetic world"

Sound occupies private and public spaces. However, there is a sound we rarely hear in everyday life: seafloor sound. This underwater sound is situated in deep spaces. So, why does thinking with the seafloor sound matter? The key to answering this inquiry lies in understanding what the seafloor sound does in our daily lives. Seafloor sound is a primary indicator used to find a spice element, so-called tin ores, beneath the seabed. The metaphor of the spice element here indicates that a little of the tin ore is present everywhere in ways that are essential to our quality of life. In other words, as tin ores are a critical metal for weaponry, electronic devices, and automobile manufacturing, seafloor sound is, thus, the bedrock of our modern infrastructure. Reflecting on and combining seafloor sound, fieldwork footage, and the Javanese musical instrument Gamelan in a documentary video, this short film mediates our unexpected ecological relation with such a distant yet intimate place: the ocean floor. Specifically, by focusing on future alternative ways of knowing the seafloor in recent seabed extractivism, the film contributes to the iterative nature of future-making and knowledge politics. In this way, the film invites audiences to rethink the knowledge hierarchy of the seafloor, which deems dominant geo-scientific seafloor knowledge as legitimate, while obscuring other modes of knowing this oceanic space.

Dr. Merdeka Agus Saputra holds a Ph.D. in Human Geography and Science and Technology Studies from the University of Oldenburg. Given his transdisciplinary training in marine biology, marine governance, and human geography, his work, broadly speaking, focuses on the diverse governance of maritime sectors, including aquaculture, fisheries, seabed mining, and undersea cables. Within this multi-scalar and sectoral marine governance, his interest primarily lies in how the intersection between (western) science, technology, and politics has (re)created and

enacted particular dominant imaginations of spaces (e.g., land, sea, and seafloor) and who and what benefits from this spatial imagination.

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Dr. Arslan Waheed (Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, UK & Institute of Business Administration, Pakistan)

“Contested Knowledges: Spatiotemporal Politics of Urban Epistemologies in Sustainability”

This paper explores the spatio-temporal politics of knowledge production and knowledge systems within Pakistani urban contexts, emphasizing how power, space, and time intersect to shape what is known, how it is known, and whose knowledge is legitimized. Karachi, the largest metropolitan of Pakistan hosts multiple overlapping knowledge systems, from institutional and scientific frameworks to grassroots, indigenous, and informal epistemologies. The presented study investigates how historical trajectories, spatial inequalities, and political agendas influence knowledge hierarchies and decision-making processes in urban governance, planning, and everyday life. Drawing on archives, participant observation, ethnography, and expert interviews, and insights of critical urban studies and discourse theory, this research critically analyzes the mechanisms through which certain knowledges are privileged while others are marginalized under the rubric of urban sustainability – a normative, donor driven, and internationally accredited governance mechanism. It further examines the implications of these processes for urban justice, sustainability, and participatory policymaking. The paper argues for a more inclusive, reflexive, and situated approach to urban knowledge production that acknowledges diverse epistemologies and challenges dominant paradigms of expertise and authority.

Dr. Arslan Waheed is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi and is currently a Research Fellow at the Oxford School of Global and Area Studies, University of Oxford. His research explores socio-spatial inequalities, discourse theory, urban planning, and asymmetrical dependencies, with a focus on Pakistan and Brazil. He has published in *South Asia Research*, *Local Environment*, *Canadian Geographer*, and *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, and co-edited *Pakistan at Seventy-Five: Identity, Governance and Conflict-Resolution in a Post-Colonial Nation-State* (Liverpool University Press)

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Dr. Rebecca Hofmann (University of Education, Freiburg)

“Aspiring refugees in German Universities: The un/making of a secure future through education”

Education as a way forward, as a promise to a better future, is especially significant in life trajectories of (young) refugees and their families. Students can enrol into German universities irrespective of their legal status. However, conditions of access such as university entrance qualifications, German language command, finances, diverging norms and practices of the German study culture, request specific knowledge whose access is entrenched in epistemic hierarchies characterized by social inequalities and depends often enough on pure chance of meeting the “right” person.

Educational trajectories, thus, are often interrupted, halted, redirected or destructed, leaving aspirational refugees with the feeling of being stuck, urging them to reconsider their hopes and future-making. Others seem unable to diverge from the plans they formulated back home, as if changing plans would corrupt their reasons (or hopes) for flight. Some are willing to take up a lot of (new) academic (and other) efforts in their future-making to reconnect to their professional pasts. All of them are faced with constant (re)evaluations of what they thought they “know” and often enough, while “being a refugee” in Germany is intended to be a temporary status passage, it becomes a permanent condition – a “trap”.

My contribution scrutinizes the entanglements of situated knowledge(s) along policy (i.e. asylum law), societal (i.e. questions of integration) and cultural (i.e. diverging ideas of an equitable future) structures by following practices of future-un/making of refugee students I have spoken to from 2016 to date. In these conversations, amongst others, the setting of reachable goals, thus aligning visions to factual realities, the timing of knowledge acquisition and continuous reassurance by others (family, counsellors, professors, volunteers, etc.) turned out to be crucial for the un/making of a secure future.

Dr. Rebecca Hofmann works as a trained anthropologist in the Department of Sociology at the University of Education in Freiburg, where she is also the contact person for (future) refugee students and researchers. Her main research focus is on mobilities and temporalities, approaching them more specifically from topics such as climate change or integration issues of refugees in Germany.

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Dr. Paride Bollettin (Masaryk University, Czech Republic)

“Collaborating with the Indigenous Mebengokré: future academia and shared epistemologies”

The presentation describes a series of collaborative actions between anthropologists and Mebengokré people from the Trincadeira-Bacajá Indigenous Land in the Amazon to reflect on the potentialities and limitations of epistemological encounters. Our twenty yearlong personal

relations have been affected in the last years by a series of novelties which redefine the ways we produce our shared reflections. The construction of the Belo Monte hydro dam impacted the local socio-environmental panorama, with the consequence that the Mebengokré are raising new demands to the academics. The implementation of more inclusive educational policies in Brazilian universities allowed the first group of Mebengokré to directly access academic knowledge practices. Meanwhile, internet connection has been installed in the Indigenous Land allowing more direct and continuative dialogues. These combined insights let innovative forms of epistemological collaborations emerge, leading towards an effective and affective coproduction of knowledge practices. In this panorama, the presentation introduces shared initiatives in research, publications and exhibitions. The goal is to illustrate how these initiatives, originally aimed at responding to the demands of the Mebengokré people, challenge hegemonic formats of academic doing. However, these initiatives often still encounter resistances by the institutionalised hierarchies of knowledge to be recognised as legitimate. The thesis is that the current panorama of Indigenous presence at the university and the possibilities offered by digital communications have an unexpected potential to edify a future more inclusive and plural academia – also in Europe.

Dr. Paride Bollettin collaborates with the Mebengokré Amerindians of the Brazilian Amazon. After obtaining a Ph.D. in Anthropology at the University of Siena in Italy in 2011, Paride worked as a researcher and as a teacher in various universities in Europe and South America. Paride is presently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Anthropology, Masaryk University, Czech Republic, and Honorary professor at the Graduate Program in Social Sciences, State University of São Paulo, Brazil, and Scientific Director of the Ethnographic Museum, Centro Studi Americanistici, Italy.

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Internal Keynote Moderators, Panel Chairs & Organisers

(in alphabetical order)

Moderators

Prof. Dr. Ines Dombrowsky heads the Department Environmental Governance at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) and is an honorary professor at Leuphana University. Her research, grounded in institutional economics and political sciences, focuses on co-ordination and cooperation in environmental governance across levels, sectors, actor types and scales. Thematic foci include the water-energy-food-ecosystems nexus, climate-biodiversity interlinkages as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. She has widely published on water governance issues cross scales. She has extensive experience in Africa, East and Central Asia, and Europe, and has previously worked

with institutions including the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ), World Bank, and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

Dr. Benjamin Etzold is a social geographer, migration scholar, and conflict researcher with a double appointment as a senior researcher at the Bonn International Center for Conflict Studies (BICC) and the BCDSS, University of Bonn. His research broadly examines how (im)mobility, violence, and labour precarity intersect in conflict-affected settings of the Global South. Over the past 17 years he has worked on diverse topics including livelihoods, migration trajectories, experiences of violence, informal labour, and food security spanning South Asia and eastern Africa.

Rachael Chan is a DPhil candidate in Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford. She is interested in the intersection between political and cultural geographies. Her current research adopts archival and ethnographic research methods to explore how Indigenous cultures feature in Taiwan's international cultural diplomacy. By doing so, she hopes to scrutinize the production of indigeneity beyond international frameworks and state-centric contours, whilst also expanding decolonial thought relating to non-Eurocentric contexts.

Dr. Simone Christ is heading the Postgraduate Programme for Sustainability Cooperation (PGP) at IDOS, which prepares Master's graduates for professional careers in international cooperation. She is a social anthropologist whose research interests include learning and training formats, research partnerships, displacement, labour migration, transnationalism, and transnational families.

Dr. Sinah Kloß holds a PhD in Social and Cultural Anthropology from Heidelberg University. Since 2020 she is leader of the research group "Marking Power: Embodied Dependencies, Haptic Regimes and Body Modification" at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies. Her current research discusses transactional regimes, bodily boundaries, and materialization processes, focusing on the interrelation of religion and biopower in Hindu Suriname, Guyana, and Trinidad. She is also interested in sensory and medical anthropology, the anthropology of reproduction, ethnographic methodology and intersectionality, New Materialist and feminist theory.

Dr. Irina Rafliana is a knowledge sociologist and STS scholar focusing on disaster risk reduction and the interplay between people, technologies, and natural systems. She has over 20 years of experience in tsunami risk communication, system evaluation, and interdisciplinary disaster research in Indonesia. Irina co-founded the Indonesian Social Science Panel for Disaster Research, has served on UNDRR's Global Science and Technology Advisory Group, and currently advises U-INSPIRE Indonesia. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Life Ethics, contributing to the SocialByNature and ERC SharedSea projects, and conducts research in collaboration with Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN).

David Brandon Smith is a late-stage doctoral candidate in church history at the BCDSS, where he is a member of the "Structures of Dependency in the Late Antique and Early Medieval Western Church" Research Group. Since February 2025, he has been a Research Associate at Goethe University, Frankfurt. In Frankfurt, he is part of the "Decolonizing Postcolonialism" Project, which focuses on the role of the churches in the struggle for an independent Namibia. David is also an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and currently serves as the Studies Inspector at the Adolf-Clarenbach Haus, a protestant house of studies in Bonn.

Organisers

(in alphabetical order)

Dr. Sarah Dusend is currently the Managing Director of the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies at the University of Bonn. She holds a PhD in Islamic Studies/History of the Islamicate and Persianate World. Her research focuses on women's studies and travel writing in the Persianate and Arab worlds, as well as mobility and pilgrimage in Islam. She is further interested in knowledge production and circulation, reconciliation and transitional justice, and questions of dependency and slavery.

Sarah-Lea Effert works as Scientific Advisor the Directorate at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). She holds a MPhil in Political Theory from the University of Oxford and in her academic work has been focusing on global, historical, and structural (in)justice theorising. She is currently pursuing a PhD project on world citizens' quest for global non-domination.

Prof. Dr. Anna-Katharina Hornidge is Director of the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) and Professor for Global Sustainable Development at the University of Bonn. In her research, Ms. Hornidge focuses on (a) the role of different types of knowledge in and for processes of change, as well as (b) questions of natural resources governance in agricultural and marine contexts. Her regional focus lies on Southeast and Central Asia, West and East Africa. Further, Prof. Hornidge serves as expert advisor in several advisory boards at national, EU and UN level: as Co-Chair of the German Advisory Council on Global Change of the German Government (WBGU), Co-Chair of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network Germany (SDSN Germany), and as Chair of the Section 'Research' in the German UNESCO-Commission.

Dima Al-Munajed is a social researcher and management professional with over 10 years of experience bridging academic scholarship and non-profit practice. She completed her Ph.D. in Development Studies at the University of Bonn, where she examined how conflict, displacement, and host-country contexts shape Syrian women's civic participation in Turkey and Lebanon using an intersectional lens. She leads the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

programme at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, and is a member of the ZEF Gender Group and the Association for Middle East Women Studies (AMEWS).

Dr. Rapti Siriwardane-de Zoysa is a researcher and lecturer whose work intersects the environmental humanities, cultural geography, and critical development studies. Focusing on cultural ecologies of the Indian Ocean world and the Asia-Pacific, her ethnographic projects explore how intersecting logics of empire and development shape urban coastal and marine spaces, bringing together questions of identity, belonging, placemaking, and multispecies relationality. She holds a joint appointment at the Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies, University of Bonn and the German Institute of Development and Sustainability, where she co-ordinates the joint partnership programme.

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The conference dinner will be held at [Restaurant Shiraz](#) ([Friedrichstraße 27, 53111 Bonn](#)) on September 18 from 19.00 to 21.00. Invited attendees include conference presenters and roundtable speakers, workshop facilitators, chairs, moderators, and panel discussants.