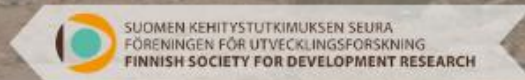


DEVELOPMENT DAYS

27–28 February 2025, Helsinki

Development Transitions: Amidst Waste, Wars, and Maldevelopment



#DevDays2025

Book of Abstracts

Development Days 2025 Conference:
**Development Transitions: Amidst Waste, Wars, and
Maldevelopment**

Organized by Finnish Society for Development Research

Main Building
University of Helsinki, Finland
27-28 February 2025

www.kehitystutkimus.fi/conference

Development Transitions: Amidst Waste, Wars and Maldevelopment

Development is in transition as an academic discipline, a foreign policy, and a professional practice. How has this process of change unfolded over time? Is it transitioning for better or worse? What changes have occurred, and what transitions should happen? These are some of the questions that the Development Days 2025 (#DevDays2025) conference explores.

While there may be various analyses of the historical trajectory and tendencies of the development process at the grassroots, national and international levels, there is a common understanding that strategies to transition into different visions for alternative futures are path-dependent. This means that realizing an envisioned future, whether through political-economic reforms, technological innovations, or socio-ecological transformations, must contend with the specificities of past and present local, institutional, social, and global contexts.

Some important advances in scientific knowledge and the prominence of the human rights discourse have been achieved despite, or as a result of the longstanding dominance of the modernization paradigm as a framework for development cooperation, alongside the continuity of unequal North-South dependent relations. Yet, the fundamental problems of humankind remain. The reality is that development is transitioning, and will have to transition, amidst the conditions and outcomes of waste, wars, and maldevelopment.

#DevDays2025 will provide a space for development researchers, practitioners, and activists to share their research findings and interrogate ideas related to these critical phenomena and the broader concept of “development transitions”.

Waste is readily perceived in an ecological sense, relevant to issues of climate change and extractivism, but it can also be interpreted in class terms. This refers to the exploitative relationship between the wasting and wasted classes, or the process of transforming what is valuable into something wasteful.

Wars at various scales are usually seen as the absence of development, necessitating humanitarian and development interventions in their aftermath. However, it is forgotten that wars have been products of, and are organic to, the racialized and gendered power relations in the violent history of global capitalist development processes.

Maldevelopment has a much deeper and more complex connotation than underdevelopment. It signifies the original sin and intrinsic logic of the historical processes of global development itself, resulting in the convoluted situation of humanity today due to the histories and legacies of imperialism and colonialism in the evolution of the world system. Conceptualizing present-day maldevelopment encourages a reflexive, introspective, and self-critical reflection as development subjects and actors ourselves.

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Keynote lectures



Alina Sajed:
“From the Third World to the Global South: Lives and afterlives of a global political project”

Abstract: The term ‘Global South’ is not a controversial one. There have been many debates in the last decades regarding its usefulness, both analytical and historical, but especially its connection to another equally debated term, ‘Third World’. Amidst of these debates, however, there has appeared a loose consensus around their meaning and linkages. The term Global South cannot be considered separately from that of the Third World. In fact, the idea of Global South could not have emerged without taking seriously the conceptual work done by the term Third World, or the legacy left by Third Worldism and its historical landmarks.

In her [Kapuscinski Lecture](#), professor Alina Sajed elucidates the meaning and histories of both terms, and the connections and ruptures between them. Her lecture will focus on understanding not only the emergence of the term Third World, but the central role played by processes of capitalist expansion in conceptualizing both Third World and Global South, albeit in different ways and at different historical junctures. What (if anything) connects the Third World project to the Global South? While the rise of emerging economies (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) has been hailed by some as signaling the end of the US’ (and the general West’s) political and economic hegemony and the arrival of multipolarity, others see little hope in this relatively recent development.

Alina Sajed is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at [McMaster University](#). Her expertise lies in the area of politics of the Global South, focusing particularly on the challenges of decolonization, and on the political, social and economic challenges of post-independence societies; Third Worldism and development policies; with a regional focus on North Africa and Middle East. She has published numerous peer-reviewed articles on these topics. She is also the author of [Postcolonial Encounters in International Relations. The Politics of Transgression in the Maghreb](#) (Routledge, 2013), and the co-author (with William D. Coleman) of [Fifty Key Thinkers on Globalization](#) (Routledge, 2012). She is the co-editor (with Randolph B. Persaud) of [Race, Gender, and Culture in International Relations. Postcolonial Perspectives](#) (Routledge, 2018).

Kapuscinski Lecture with Associate Professor Alina Sajed on Thursday 27 February, 2025 at 10:00-11:30 (Small Festive Hall).



Ali Kadri:
“De-development and the
Accumulation of Waste Through
Wars

Abstract: In neoclassical analysis, war is treated as a side event to economic processes. In econometric analysis, data indicating war-years are written off or smoothed to maintain the steady state of the time series. It is as if nothing happens to impact the economy over the longer term. In short, war is treated as a fleeting nuisance, a sort of tax that distorts capital accumulation. War, however, is the ultimate form of waste. Waste is commodified. It is objectified labor and it sells for profit like any other commodity. It is therefore of value and submits to the dynamics of the law of value. Waste, especially war, is the sort of commodity that creates its own demand. People must pay for waste and war. They are choiceless, and as such, a demand-led crisis for waste products is unlikely to ever arise. What is more, as the crisis of capital deepens, capital resorts more and more to the production of waste, of which war becomes a production sphere on its own and, a leading stage that underpins the whole process of capital accumulation. In my ongoing work, I argue that war was crucial to the formation of capitalism and it continues to support the profitability of capital to this day.

Ali Kadri is a leading scholar specializing in the political economy and development economics of the Middle East, North Africa, and East Asia. His extensive writings include [The Accumulation of Waste: A Political Economy of Systemic Destruction](#) (2023), [China’s Path to Development Against Neoliberalism](#) (2021), [A Theory of Forced Labour Migration: The Proletarianisation of the West Bank Under Occupation, 1967-1992](#) (2020), [Imperialism with Reference to Syria](#) (2019), [Cordon Sanitaire: A Single Law Governing Development in East Asia and the Arab World](#) (2018), [The Unmaking of Arab Socialism](#) (2016), and [Arab Development Denied: Dynamics of Accumulation by Wars of Encroachment](#) (2014).

Currently, he is a visiting professor at [Sun Yat-Sen University](#). Previously, he was a senior research fellow at the [Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore](#), and has been affiliated with the [London School of Economics](#) as senior fellow at its Laboratory for Advanced Research on the Global Economy and a visiting fellow at its Department of International Development. Before returning to academia, he worked for a decade at the [United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia \(UN ESCWA\)](#) in Lebanon, where he led the Economic Analysis Section.

Ali Kadri’s keynote lecture on Thursday 27 February, 2025 at 11:30-12:45 (Small Festive Hall).



Manuela Picq:
“Scholar Activism: When Our
Bodies Stand for Our Ideas”

Abstract: Should it feel good to get an award for scholar-activism? As well-intentioned the recognition of my activism is, it misses the point of what activism is by singling out one person, especially a scholar. The danger with claiming scholar activism as heroic is two-fold. First, it makes activists exceptional, implying that society may rely on exceptional individuals instead of valuing the collective work. Second, it glorifies the activism of scholars, as if it were more valuable than that of others while ignoring the hierarchies that empower and protect academia. Instead, we must normalize scholar activism, sharing the load and using our bodies as shields and doing activism in constellation with others, valuing emotions, and embodying our ideas.

Manuela Picq is the 2024 recipient of the [Outstanding Activist Scholar Award](#) of the International Studies Association. She is a Professor of International Relations at Universidad San Francisco de Quito (Ecuador) and Senior Lecturer in Political Science and Sexuality, Women’s and Gender Studies at Amherst College (USA). Her most influential books include [Savages and Citizens: How Indigeneity Shapes the States](#) (co-authored with Andrew Canessa 2024), [Vernacular Sovereignities: Indigenous Women Challenging World Politics](#) (2018) and [Sexualities in World Politics](#) (co-edited with Markus Thiel, 2015). She is Editor of [Public Humanities](#) and has contributed to international media outlets such as *Al Jazeera* and the *New York Times*. Her work at the intersection of scholarship, media, and activism led her to be nominated in a [New Generation of Public Intellectuals \(2018\)](#) and featured in the FemiList 100 (2021). Manuela’s legal work contributing expert reports for Indigenous, and women rights is accompanied by larger causes in the UN and OAS systems. With her partner, they set an international legal precedent with the recognition of Indigenous ancestral marriage at the OHCHR in 2022. In 2021 and 2023, she coordinated the presidential campaign of Indigenous water defender Yaku Pérez in Ecuador. She lives between Ecuador and Massachusetts.

Plenary roundtable with Professor Manuela Picq on Friday 28 February, 2025 at 09:30-10:45 (Small Festive Hall).

Working Group 1: Towards Decolonizing African History and Visions of Development and (Post)COVID-19 Precarity: Business as Usual or Wasted Crisis in Semi-Authoritarian Settings?

Chair(s)

Karembé Ahimbisibwe, University of Jyväskylä

Judith Kahamba, University of Jyväskylä

Abstract

The COVID-19 crisis posed an unprecedented challenge to humanity. It disrupted inter and intra-national movements, widened the gap between the rich and the poor, and impacted state-citizen relations, like never before. For instance, the heterogeneous categories who live in unplanned informal urban neighborhoods were disproportionately affected by the inconsiderate enforcement of COVID-19 protocols in semi-authoritarian states. The (non)-essentialization of citizens and their livelihoods, international travel bans, and closure of borders, lockdowns, and social distancing protocols gravely affected national development and exacerbated citizens' fragility. The opportunity presented by the pandemic and its aftermath to rethink their development practices which have always been skewed against the poor, was not seized. Instead of viewing the pandemic from the prism of "never waste a crisis" to embark on long-term planning and transformation of the shaky ghetto livelihoods, weak healthcare systems, and urban informal structures, and to improve governance, most of the (semi)authoritarian states and their ruling class maintained a business-as-usual attitude. While some states downplayed the seriousness of the pandemic, others responded with relief packages that were few and far between to ease citizens' precarity. Also, under the pretext of containing COVID-19, semi-authoritarian states militarized the public health procedures, selectively violated basic rights of political opposition, engaged in wealth and power appropriation schemes, and, in some cases, embarked on populist sloganeering that dismissed COVID-19 as non-existent.

We invite theoretical articulations and empirical explorations into the different ways and forms in which the state's handling of vulnerable groups showcased levels of wasted opportunity and/or business as (un)usual in semi-authoritarian states. Papers that focus on how differentiated categories of citizens survived COVID-19 and its aftermath amid increased state brutality and a dearth of state-planned support are also welcome. The working group is coordinated by postdoctoral researchers in the project: Re-articulating citizenship in the times of uncertainty: Hybrid narratives of COVID-19 responses in sub-Saharan Africa at the University of Jyväskylä.

Presentations

This WG will be held on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 16:00-17:30 during the Working Group Session II.

'This is war': weaponization of COVID-19 pandemic in Museveni's Uganda

Karembé F Ahimbisibwe, University of Jyväskylä

Abstract: In the first of his so many COVID-19 national addresses, President Yoweri Museveni framed the pandemic as 'war of the wanainchi (citizens)'. This declaration was followed by deploying a rough pandemic containment approach that shut down the economy and civil

liberties. In this paper, I build on the notion of weaponization (Passeri 2022) to argue that authoritarian regimes (mis)manage crises in ways that escalate violence against and constrain citizen dissent. I argue that Museveni like other authoritarian leaders across the globe took advantage of COVID-19 to shore up his fading legitimacy, control dissent, and subdue growing opposition while also allowing the ruling elites to profiteer from the pandemic. Based on selected presidential speeches, media reports, and interviews with private school teachers in low-cost private schools in Kampala neighborhoods, five ways in which the Museveni regime weaponized the COVID-19 pandemic are identified as militarization, securitization, politicization, economization, and socialization. These ways were a mixture of new and old repressive strategies that Museveni (President since 1986) has deployed to stifle and disorient citizen dissent for regime survival and power appropriation. This work contributes to debates on how authoritarian leaders waste opportunities presented by crises by appropriating power instead of initiating reforms to rebuild waning public trust in their leadership.

Institutional Logics in Legitimizing State's COVID-19 Responses in Tanzania: Evidence from Newspaper Reporting Analysis

Judith Kahamba, University of Jyväskylä

Tiina Kontinen, University of Jyväskylä

Abstract: During the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, SARS-Covid-2-19 (COVID-19), governments localized the global COVID-19 guidelines and introduced diverse measures to contain the spread of the virus. Further, states engaged in legitimizing these responses to appear rational and appropriate in the eyes of citizens. This study focuses on Tanzania, which offers an example of an exceptional COVID-19 response of not having instituted lockdowns but rather resorted to various non-restrictive measures at different stages of the pandemic. Drawing on the institutional logics approach and conducting a content analysis of 738 newspaper articles in 2020-2022, we explore what kinds of logics emerged in state legitimization of diverse responses during the pandemic and how these changed over time. Results show how the interplay of economic, traditional, religion logics and other logics legitimated government's priority towards citizens' livelihoods and its inadequate investment on strengthening healthcare systems to adhere to global pandemic compliance in the first and second wave of the pandemic.

Working Group 2: Contemporary Sustainable (mal)development

Chair(s)

Janne Salovaara, University of Helsinki

Sophia Hagolani-Albov, University of Helsinki

Abstract

In this hybrid session we will be exploring comprehensions of contemporary sustainability. As we see it, current practices (and conceptualization thereof) of sustainability exhibits a market logic that seems to contradict commonly elicited aims of sustainability. By our postulation the dominant, and commercialized, path from unsustainable to sustainable is largely approached through consumption choices. However, this mode of operation presents paradoxes. For example, the so-called sustainable production predominantly generates very tightly limited sustainability as it often continues to produce goods that are still factually unsustainable but CO₂-compensated with different carbon capture schemes. To continue, green economy or green consumerism suggests somehow to generate sustainability as these compensated goods are consumed more and more. Similar (ill) market logic of contemporary sustainable (mal)development—or faux sustainability also appears to suggest that voting between the seemingly unsustainable or sustainable is the way for the citizen to participate which, while is democratic, exhibits very limited agency. As sustainability is said to require everyone's participation, in many cases there is an absence of the necessary emancipatory acts and legitimate autonomy to transform our unsustainable systems. While sustainability is to be left as a choice, the mechanisms with which these choices are pursued seem coercive rather than persuasive as they appear to be required to come from a distinct ideology—a tribe to which one must belong to be able to enact sustainability. However, these are just a few examples in which we observe contemporary sustainability to be paradoxical and likely to continue to reproduce the current maldevelopment.

We would like to invite fellow critical academics, activists, and artists to present their thoughts on these topics in whichever format they choose to best convey their message to their peers. First and foremost, we intend this session to be a dialogue prompted by those in the audience who worryingly observe the dilemmas in contemporary sustainability. We hope that this session ignites new ideas for research, new collaborations, and in general a new theme to be referenced in discussion about the issues in sustainable development. The session is open to various methods for the ideas to be shared and will determine the exact agenda of the session based on the submissions received.

Presentations

This WG will be held on Friday 28 February 2025 at 13:30-15:00 during the Working Group Session IV.

'Can Nature Speak?' Transition to an Ecologically Civilized Society and explorations on "Buen Vivir" and biocentrism in Latin America

Gustavo Hernandez Nieva, Antoni Riuz de Montoya University

Abstract: In her influential essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Spivak argues that it is impossible for "the subaltern" to speak when the field of inquiry is unable to relate to "otherness"

with anything else than its own paradigm. Spivak further claims that knowledge is never innocent and is always operated by Western interests and power. It then seems negligible for the subaltern to “speak” within the phallogocentric framework, as the “subject” is divided by gender, class, caste, region, religion, and other lines, such as the category of “Nature.” In this paper, I present insights on the bio-centric, decentered post-development Latin American narrative of ‘Buen Vivir’ and the ways in which Nature can speak and be lived as an intercultural experience. I argue for the need to legally include Nature’s voices in the transition to an ecologically civilized society, which generally means a transition from anthropocentrism to biocentrism.

Interplay between Aid, Policy, and Growth: Effects of Official Development Assistance on Sustainable Agriculture Development in the Udayapur District of Nepal

Jagannath Kafle, University of Turku

Abstract: This research explores the nexus between Aid, Policy, and growth through the insight of the Stakeholder Theory by examining the role of Official Development Assistance (ODA), policy intervention, and sustainable agriculture development in developing countries. The research outcomes focus on social, economic, and environmental improvements through sustainable farming practices. Using the Udayapur district of Nepal as a case study, it investigates how ODA and policy interventions can enhance sustainable agriculture development and improve food security, welfare, and local livelihoods for farmers and smallholders. This study uses a mixed methods approach by utilizing secondary macro and micro-level data available in Nepal’s central, provincial, and local government offices, assessing sustainable farming practices, agricultural productivity, sustainability measures, and welfare impacts as crucial outcome variables. The qualitative part of the research explores sustainable agriculture principles and examines the compatibility of the agriculture development policy adopted by Nepal with sustainability principles. The quantitative part of the analysis examines how the ODA and policy intervention perform in recipients’ social, economic, and environmental key performance indicators in practice. The study contributes academic and societal values theoretically and empirically to the aid-development literature and shared responsibilities of various stakeholders by highlighting the pivotal role of ODA and policy interventions in promoting sustainable agricultural development, ensuring food security, fostering economic growth, and reducing poverty through a bottom-up approach. The researcher hopes the research outcome will be equally valuable to the Global North and Global South for development and sustainability discourses.

Refinery and Mangroves: Media Representation and Environmental Justice in Tabasco, Mexico

Dora Elia Ramos Muñoz, El Colegio de la Frontera Sur
Daniela Marías Sánchez, El Colegio de la Frontera Sur

Abstract: This study examines how regional media in Tabasco portrayed the destruction of mangroves during the construction of a refinery in Paraíso, Tabasco, initiated by a 2018. Drawing on 116 journalistic articles and using the metaphor of mangroves as victims and energy as the perpetrator, the research provides critical insights into media portrayals and their implications for environmental justice.

The analysis was guided by key questions: How did the media frame the destruction of XX hectares of mangroves? Which aspects of this "murder" were emphasized, hidden, or omitted, and why? The journalistic narratives revealed a series of equivalences: the refinery was equated

Tabasco as national oil center, as torrent of economic reactivation, and ultimately as national sovereignty. In this framing, the mangroves were rendered voiceless and replaceable, overshadowed by narratives prioritizing sovereignty and economic growth.

The study highlights how the natural risks and responsibilities associated with the project were minimized, leaving local communities to bear the environmental and social consequences. Sustainability, though occasionally mentioned, was relegated to a marginal role and as substitutable, obscured by dominant discourses.

These findings emphasize the need for greater collaboration between academia, activism, and the media to bridge gaps between knowledge, communication, and societal action. Such partnerships are crucial to amplify awareness, foster accountability, and ensure environmental concerns are effectively addressed in public discourse.

Ecopolitics of Extractivism and the Development Paradox: Indigenous Struggles from Jharkhand (India) and the Global South

Koustab Majumdar, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute

Abstract: The account of sustainability in contemporary development often operates within a market-driven green economy framework with that commodifies natural resources and marginalizes Indigenous communities. This (presentation-based) paper critically examines the intersection of ecopolitics, extractivism, and the development paradox, focusing on how extractive practices justified as developmental imperatives disproportionately harm Indigenous communities. Using the Asur tribal community of Jharkhand, India, as a case study, the paper explores how protective land policies, such as the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908) and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act (1949)—originally designed to safeguard Indigenous land rights and promote sustainable resource management—have been systematically undermined under the pretext of industrial and economic growth.

The study situates these local struggles within broader Global South dynamics, where resource extraction is central to national economic strategies but exacerbates socio-environmental inequities. It argues that the ecopolitics of extractivism legitimizes resource commodification and frames it as a pathway to development while perpetuating dispossession, ecological degradation, and labor exploitation. Promises of community development and sustainable industrial growth often serve as compensatory narratives, masking the continued marginalization of Indigenous communities and environmental degradation. This aligns with the market logic of contemporary sustainable (mal)development, which prioritizes economic consumption over genuine sustainability, rendering development promises hollow.

Through the lens of the Asur's transition from traditional iron smelting and settled agriculture to precarious wage labor in Hindalco's bauxite mines, the paper highlights the paradoxical outcomes of development agendas that marginalize Indigenous community. It advocates for reimagining sustainability by integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, ensuring equitable resource governance, and challenging exploitative industrial paradigms. By decolonizing sustainability discourses, the study emphasizes the need to realign development practices with principles of justice, equity, and ecological balance across the Global South and beyond.

Bridging Gaps in Integration – The Unfinished Journey of Migrants in Finland

Zahra Hosseini, University of Helsinki

Abstract: Migration has always been a cornerstone of human development, but its drivers and challenges have evolved dramatically in recent decades. While migration bolsters economic growth and poverty alleviation, its social dimensions - particularly integration- present persistent dilemmas. Despite significant financial investments in integration programs, achieving cultural inclusion and fostering social cohesion remains elusive.

As a country with increasing immigration, Finland offers a microcosm of the broader tensions surrounding migration and integration in Europe. Drawing on the findings of a study in the Trust-M project in Finland, we critique the sustainability of contemporary integration policies. Interviews with migrants revealed while many migrants appreciate language courses and cultural orientation programs, they often report feelings of exclusion, discrimination, and a lack of belonging. Many interviewees felt uneasy about the refugee and even immigrant labels, feeling neither accepted nor trusted in Finland, and this sense of exclusion and mistrust hindered their integration experience. These findings align with broader data, such as the OECD's mixed economic and social integration results and the International Organization for Migration's emphasis on cultural activities that often fail to deliver meaningful outcomes.

Integration, as widely acknowledged, is a two-way process. However, existing programs often overemphasize migrants' adaptation without adequately fostering reciprocal openness from host societies. In Finland, initiatives such as the MoniSuomi survey and TAVATA program study the gaps, but structural barriers and societal resistance limit their impact. Issues like precarious employment, loneliness, and digital exclusion further hinder social cohesion, highlighting the maldevelopment of well-intentioned policies.

Situating these challenges within the broader context of sustainable (mal)development, this presentation highlights that integration is a two-way process. Investments in programs to empower immigrants- such as support for unemployment or community strengthening - do not effectively enhance cultural inclusion. Worse, they risk fostering perceptions among locals that immigrants are a societal burden. Achieving true integration requires balanced strategies that promote mutual acceptance and shared cultural understanding.

Working Group 3: Finland's Development Policy and Cooperation: Academic Knowledge Production and Exchange Amidst a Changing Paradigm

Chair(s)

Eija Ranta, University of Helsinki

Martta Kaskinen, University of Helsinki

Abstract

Finland's development policy and cooperation have been rapidly changing. Historically, poverty eradication, human rights, and gender equality have been central pillars of Finnish foreign and development policy. However, development scholars and practitioners are currently discussing a paradigm shift towards an increased focus on promoting Finnish trade and security interests, while simultaneously facing direct questioning by politicians. Existing and ongoing academic research on Finland's development policy and cooperation has been largely absent from the political discussions, that have guided recent development policy decisions.

In this policy environment, the need for collaboration among development researchers is highlighted. In this working group, we invite scholars who conduct research on Finland's development policy and/or cooperation, from diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary backgrounds, to share and discuss their ongoing or published research. The aim of the working group is to support networking, collaboration, and mutual learning among development researchers working on development cooperation (preferably Finland's, but others can also be considered), thereby strengthening our community and contributing to research-based policy making. We also invite development practitioners and scholars working beyond academia to join the working group.

Presentations

This WG will have three sessions.

Session 1: Knowledge and learning in development

Thursday 27 February 2025 at 14:00-15:30 during the Working Group Session I.

History of Finland's Development Cooperation as a Learning Process

Juhani Koponen, University of Helsinki

Abstract: Finland's development cooperation is often regarded as a mighty learning process. It indeed has changed much during its 70-odd years history. Many things are now done very differently, and on a very different knowledge base, than previously. Different approaches have been introduced, used, modified and replaced by new approaches when it has been realized that the old ones do not work. This has led to presentist thinking: development cooperation appears as an ever expanding frontier where the past does not matter as the action happens 'now'. In this presentation I wish to sketch a historical view of Finnish development cooperation as a learning process, based on my still ongoing historical research. I depart from the simple observation that development cooperation is not a monolith. It is rather an internally conflicting institution that brings together ideas and aims with activities and practices, and the lofty ideals are not

necessarily much reflected in some of the practices. Its aims are both developmentalist (derived from the ideology of developmentalism) and instrumentalist (promotion of short term political and economic benefits). My argument is that many changes in the history of Finnish development cooperation are due to learning but the process has been uneven. Institutional learning can affect either the basic aims or the actual practices, or both. In our case, it has been restricted mostly to the level of practices and the changes have not been complete or linear. Some of the old ideas (notably the belief in the power of developmentalism) and aims have remained in one form or another but there has also been much institutional forgetting which has enabled some old instrumentalist policies to return in different guises (e.g. the promotion of Finnish companies).

In Search of Better Policies? The Relevance of Different Forms of Knowledge for Finnish Development Policy

Anja Onali, University of Helsinki

Abstract: Modern interpretations of Aristotelian concepts of knowing, episteme, techne and phronesis, have lately been adopted to study expertise and professions. The article argues that a combination of the three types of knowledge would be useful in development cooperation and that especially phronesis, or practical wisdom, should take the central stage as it combines practice with values. Although values are central in development work, they are currently undermined by technical understandings. The article explored the different forms of knowledge that are used and appreciated within the Finnish development cooperation. The data was drawn from a process of providing topical and rapid scientific inputs to Finnish ministry officials and it was complemented with key-informant interviews. The findings showed that although scientific knowledge was appreciated by the ministry officials, the internal incentive structures of the development administration favored technical forms of knowledge. Especially results information as well as picking up travelling ideas from the major trendsetters within the field were important in everyday work. The main structural constraints for phronesis to flourish within the department seemed to be a lack of time for learning and reflection. Development is a messy process involving stakeholders with various interests and wicked problems that do not have simple solutions and are inflicted with power struggles. With declining funding and diminishing appreciation from the side of the power holders, the value of knowledge available to improve the quality and effectiveness of development policy and cooperation becomes important to all stakeholders.

Expert Knowledge in Transit: Finns Mapping the Global South, c. 1970-2000

Johanna Skurnik, University of Turku

Abstract: This paper discusses the history of Finland's development policy and cooperation from a historical perspective by focusing on Finnish technical aid to the global south in the sphere of mapping and cartography. In the wake of the second world war, the United Nations started to promote cartography and mapping as one of the central means to foster development across the globe by means of technical development aid. From the 1970s onwards the Finnish state and Finnish cartographic experts started to increasingly contribute to cooperative mapping and transfer of mapping practices and technologies to foster development in the global south.

In this paper I discuss my ongoing research project, entitled "Maps for Development: Finnish mapping practices in the postcolonial world, c. 1970-2000". The project investigates how, why and in what type of roles Finns participated in cooperative mapping projects in the global south. It critically analyses how these projects intersected with the broader interests of the consulting companies who were contracted to undertake the development work and to mobilize the expert

knowledge that the counterparts were determined to require for the modernization of their states.

The project is based on the analysis of a diverse set of primary sources ranging from archival manuscript materials to published documents and media sources as well as oral history interviews with former project workers. Empirically, the project brings together case studies of Finnish mapping work in different geographical contexts such as Nepal, Egypt, Tanzania, Namibia, and Bangladesh to provide a comparative analysis of the interests that different actors had in mapping and maps, why they viewed maps and cartographic information as the foundation for development, and to understand why and how these interests and ideas possibly varied between the different geographical contexts.

Researchers Challenging the End of Development Policy?

Jari Lanki

Abstract: With the rise in populist politics sceptical of development aid solving any problems, there is an increasing worry that donor countries will marginalize towards extinction any concerns of developing countries and aid in their development policies. Parts of research community share in this worry. Donors such as Finland have in the past at least professed some form of evidence-based development policy. This implies currently potentially more important role than ever for development studies research and researchers – in testifying how development policy solutions and aid work. However, three decades ago general policy studies scholars suggested that even best policy solutions do not get traction if they do not fit in with policymakers’ pre-existing basic understanding of how the world works in their policy area. Therefore, the (ongoing) study claims that for the research community wanting to challenge the increasing marginalization of traditional development concerns, at least part of the task should likely be ‘Going back to basics’. Not to argue for the efficacy of any particular projects or policies, but to examine, and where contradicted or unsupported by research challenge (in a detailed way), the understanding of developing countries and development issues used to justify given development policies. However, to do this requires first a preparatory development policy analysis. Analyzing, one by one, what claims exactly the new more populist donor development policies make about developing countries and development issues. As an example, Finland’s new stated development policy will be analyzed. What are claimed to be the current problems in developing countries requiring solutions? What are their claimed causes? What is claimed can (or should) be done about them, and by whom? And what is claimed Finland specifically as a donor can, or should, do about them?

Session 2: Finnish partnerships with the Global South

on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 16:00-17:30 during the Working Group Session II.

Navigating Success in North-South Partnerships: Lessons From the LMUU Project in Ugandan Higher Education

David Onen, Makerere University

Abstract: In an era where institutional partnerships and collaborative networks are pivotal to advancing academic knowledge production and exchange, and as development policies and cooperation among nations continue to evolve, creating effective collaborations remains a formidable challenge, even for well-established higher education institutions (HEIs) in developed countries. However, the Project for Building Institutional Capacity for Training Leadership and Management of Ugandan Universities (LMUU)—a north-south collaboration involving the

Universities of Tampere and Helsinki in Finland and Makerere University and Uganda Management Institute (UMI) in Uganda—emerges as an exemplar.

This study investigated the determinants of success across LMUU’s two phases, Phase I (2010–2012) and Phase II (2017–2020), driven by the need to uncover lessons for sustainable institutional collaborations amidst these shifting global dynamics. Employing a case study design, the research critically analyzed project outcomes through extensive documentation and stakeholder insights, providing a robust framework for understanding complex partnerships. Findings revealed that Phase I achieved remarkable success, meeting objectives within budget while fostering participant motivation, attributed to effective leadership, a well targeted composition of beneficiaries, and robust financial resources. In contrast, Phase II faced challenges stemming from divergent institutional profiles and inconsistent processes among partner HEIs. The study concludes that adaptive leadership, alignment of institutional processes, and iterative goal-setting are critical for sustaining partnership success. It recommends the continuous reassessment of strategies through political, bureaucratic, anarchical, and collegial lenses to enhance resilience and mutual benefit. These findings offer invaluable insights for HEIs seeking to develop and sustain effective north-south collaborations in an increasingly complex global academic environment.

Expectations of Decline: Afterlives of a Finnish-Kenyan Water Development Project (1980s-1990s)

Yonatan N. Gez, University Institute of Lisbon
Ilmari Huotari, University of Helsinki

Abstract: Among the points of critique leveled at the international development apparatus, a commonly held idea is that, more often than not, interventions fail to meet their target objectives. Even when these objectives seem to be reached, their long-term sustainability remains in question. While common among post-development critics, variations on such criticisms—which we shorthand as “expectations of decline”—are often voiced from within the development sector itself, reflecting concerns about best practices, flawed paradigms, and insufficient attention to long-term unintended consequences.

Our presentation will focus on the case study of Kefinco, a Kenyan-Finnish water project implemented between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s. Headquartered in the in western Kenya town of Kakamega and promoted through slogans such as ‘water for a million’, the project was one of Finland’s most ambitious development initiatives in Africa and resulted in the construction and rehabilitation of thousands of water points across western Kenya. The fact that, on the whole, the project was able to meet its ambitious objectives while keeping free from scandals—and over time, came to be regarded as a gold standard for successful community engagement—make it a curious prism through which to examine expectations of decline. In interviews conducted with former Kefinco employees—nearly all of them retired engineers—we observed a common, uneasy tension: On the one hand, interviewees were expressing their solemn hope that their dedication to the project has not been in vein, while on the other hand, they maintained a pessimistic conviction that regarded Kefinco and projects like it as doomed to fail.

The presentation will draw on a dozen semi-structured interviews conducted in Finland in December 2022. Supplementary archival data was collected from the archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Helsinki. Lastly, we draw on a series of fieldwork visits to Kakamega, including a 2023 collective ethnographic exercise.

Anti-apartheid of Pro-SADCC? – The Finnish View on the Nordic-SADCC Agreement in 1985-1986

Jerkko Holmi, University of Turku

Abstract: Despite the heightened international isolation, the Republic of South Africa was the leading force in southern Africa during the Cold War period. To alleviate this dominance, nine states in the region established in the early 1980s Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) to pursue more independent and competent counterforce.

The Nordic countries as high investors on Official Development Assistance wanted to support this regional movement. Nordic countries formed an agreement of “mutual understanding” with SADCC in early 1986 to deepen the economic and cultural ties between the two country groupings, and to alleviate the dependency of the SADCC countries from the South African sphere of influence. The Prime Minister of Finland Kalevi Sorsa proposed the development already in 1982, giving its name ‘Sorsa initiative’.

In Finland, discussion on cooperation surfaced in 1985. In my article (draft), I examine the Finnish activities promoting the Nordic-SADCC relations during the joint agreement process in 1985 and early 1986, through archival materials of the Archives of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This analysis provides an overlook on how these connections were promoted during the process, and what were the justifications behind the motion. The study focuses on Finnish policymakers but utilizes viewpoints of Finnish society explaining the contemporary tones of the subject. The issues revolve around the concepts of dependency, regional self-determination and regionalism, Nordic cooperation, antiapartheid movement, and international economics of New International Economic Order (NIEO).

Finnish Development Cooperation in Afghanistan – A Gendered perspective

Ilona Kuusi, University of Helsinki

Abstract: In this presentation, I will provide an overview of my ongoing article-based PhD thesis. My first article examines the OECD’s gender equality policy marker, assessing its effectiveness in translating the gender equality objectives outlined in development program plans into quantifiable data and evaluating the practical utility of the resulting statistics. Drawing on empirical data from Finnish development cooperation projects in Afghanistan, the article explores the challenges inherent in converting qualitative data into quantitative indicators. Using a mixed-method approach with a primary focus on quantitative analysis, the article employs semi-structured and thematic interviews, data from OECD DAC, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA), as well as relevant academic literature. The findings, consistent with prior research, indicate that the DAC’s gender equality policy marker falls short of accurately representing the gender emphasis within development programs, thus offering limited practical value for the Finnish government.

My second article, currently co-authored with my supervisors Juhani Koponen and Marjaana Jauhola, analyses the nature of Finland’s gender equality policy promoted in Afghanistan as an intertwining of rhetoric (political discourse) and practice (implemented projects). We explore this interplay through the changing paradigms of feminist development studies: WID, WAD, and GAD. Drawing on Caroline Moser’s (1993) distinction between practical and strategic needs, we simultaneously assess the gender equality policy promoted in Afghanistan through Chandra Mohanty’s (1992, 2003) critique of the representations of the “Third World” in Western discourse, and the geopolitical feminist critique of Abu-Lughod et al (2023), which focuses on how global

interventions and policies often reflect imperial interests under the guise of humanitarianism and security.

The third article is planned to focus on Afghan women's experiences with Finnish development cooperation projects with focus on qualitative interviews of Afghan refugee women in Finland.

Contested Feminist Activism and Finland's Changing Gender Equality Partnerships in Development Cooperation in Kenya

Eija Ranta, University of Helsinki

Martta Kaskinen, University of Helsinki

Mariah Ngutu, National Defense University – Kenya (NDU-K); University of Nairobi

Carolina Buendía Sarmiento, University of Helsinki

Ilmari Huotari, University of Helsinki

Abstract: In recent years, gender equality has again become a contested battleground of differing viewpoints, interests, and ideologies. Many parts of the world have been witnessing two contradictory processes: the proliferation of new, autonomous, feminist, queer, and transgender initiatives, and the simultaneous rise of anti-gender movements, conservative right-wing nationalism, and religious fundamentalism. International development cooperation, although much criticized, has been the principal institutional mechanism for organizing partnerships around gender equality between the Global South and Global North. For Finland, gender equality and women's and girl's rights have been among its key development goals with long-term partner countries, such as Kenya.

This presentation introduces our Kone Foundation funded research project (2024-2027), which investigates the operations and adaptations of Finland's gender equality partnerships with Kenya at a time when the OECD/DAC aid infrastructure is undergoing internal transformation, while at the same time being increasingly challenged by populist politics and autocratization, and unresolved colonial legacies. Using cross-sectoral ethnographic methodologies, our research examines how Finland's gender equality programs and projects are negotiating the increasingly conservative anti-gender dynamics (in Kenya and Finland), while at the same time responding to, and learning from, new decolonizing feminist initiatives. It also scrutinizes the ways in which other kinds of changes in global politics and development infrastructure – including the decline of democracy, the rise of racist nationalism, and the private sector turn – manifest in program and project contexts, their role in conditioning feminist organizing and gender equality work, and resistance to them. Ultimately, the project presents the case for both development practitioners and feminist activists searching for feminist transformative change through just and decolonizing ways of organizing global partnerships promoting gender equality and feminist networking.

Session 3: Finnish interests and policy trends

on Friday 28 February 2025 at 13:30-15:00 during the Working Group Session IV.

"Better days with timber": - Forest Industries and Finland as an Importer and Exporter of foreign Aid 1949-1975

Niklas Jensen-Eriksen, University of Helsinki

Essi Lamberg, University of Helsinki

Laura Berger, Aalto University

Abstract: Our research project investigates how the political image of post-World War II Finland shifted from being considered a "developing country" to becoming an industrialized "donor country". The slogan of postwar Finland in the 1940s was "towards better days with timber"

(“puulla parempiin päiviin”), which underlined the centrality of forest industries in the Finnish postwar economic growth. Two decades later, the Finnish aid to the global South was based on the same idea.

The emergence of the Finnish welfare state is often narrated as an outcome of Finnish persistence (sisu) and stand-alone attitude to hard work. In truth, 1950s’ Finland was considered a “developing country” by the major international aid organizations, resulting in a total of 18 loans granted by the World Bank from 1949 to 1975. With these loans, the World Bank – and those countries holding positions of power within its ranks – tried to influence the Finnish political economy and make it less dependent on the Soviet Bloc.

The loans mainly benefited the Finnish forestry sector and adjacent infrastructure, leading to increasingly close ties with the Western markets. Regardless of its status as an aid receiving country, Finland itself started to grant foreign aid as early as the late 1950s. The forestry sector was, again, at the core of this political practice, only now it was promoted as a field of “expertise” distinctive to Finland. In 1967, Finland became a net exporter of aid, meaning that the amount of aid Finland granted to the global south exceeded the amount of aid it received. The borderline between development policy and trade policy remained fickle and co-dependent for years to come.

Our research is mainly based on archival materials from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland, the World Bank, the Bank of Finland and the Central Archives for Finnish Business Records. Thusfar the history of Finnish development cooperation and the postwar monetary aid Finland received from abroad have received little scholarly attention. The contemporary public debate on the shifting paradigm of the global development industry makes researching the dual role of the Finnish government in the mid-20th century topical. Our research enables comparisons to the rising status of the BRICS countries in global affairs and the similar double agendas of development they apply in their policymaking.

We focus on the following questions:

1. Why did Finland receive and grant foreign aid simultaneously? What was Finland’s main objective?
2. How did the Finnish course of conduct take shape? Who influenced it? How big was the role of commercial interests in the early development cooperation projects that Finland supported?
3. Environmental policy started taking root in Finland in the late 1960s. Did this influence Finnish development and trade policies in the global South?

Business History of Finnish Development Cooperation

Maiju Wuokko, University of Helsinki

Abstract: In this presentation, Dr. Maiju Wuokko will introduce her research interests in the history of Finnish development cooperation. She has contributed two chapters to the forthcoming History of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (scheduled for publication in 2025). The chapters address the evolution of the Ministry’s development cooperation department and Finland’s development cooperation policies between 1982 and 1995. The chapters are based on extensive archival material from the Ministry’s records.

Additionally, Dr. Wuokko will outline her research idea and plan for a future project, Kehitys kaupan? [Development for sale?]. The project will examine Finland’s official development aid from a business history perspective, investigating the role of private enterprises in implementing

Finnish development aid policies and projects. The study aims to explore why and how companies have participated in development cooperation and how they have aligned their commercial interests with the objectives of development cooperation.

Epistemic colonization in Finland's Development Policy? Towards Problematization of Relationship between trends of Decolonization and Populism

Teresa Juhaninmäki, University of Jyväskylä

Tiina Kontinen, University of Jyväskylä

Gelas Rubakula, University of Dar es Salaam

Abstract: In recent years, the urge to decolonize development has been strongly articulated both by academics and practitioners. The discussion has pointed out to the historical continuities between colonialism and development in the relations between countries from the so-called Global North and South as well as the pertinent asymmetries in the funding, knowledge, and vocabularies of development. However, the engagement with the decolonizing discourses has not been strong in countries that claim not to have colonial past, i.e. countries such as Finland that have not historically been colonial masters of territories in the Global South. This paper, however, departs from three justification for the relevance of decolonization debates for Finnish development policy, not least within the current drastic changes due to the anti-development co-operation populist politics, increased economic self-interest, and securitization. To capture the current trend, the paper uses lens of epistemic decolonization to investigate the rhetoric used in Finland's recent Report on International Economic Relations and Development Cooperation (2024). It examines the ways in which notions such as "development", "Finland", and "developing countries" are discussed, paying attention to discursive constructions of "others" and diverse asymmetries therein. The results are further reflected vis-à-vis Finland's previous political discourses emphasizing partnerships and problematizes the relationship between decolonizing drive and populist politics, both advocating for transformation of international development in different ways. The paper is a first draft for a book chapter to be featured in an edited book resulting from New Directions in Development Studies -project implemented in collaboration with universities in Finland, Tanzania, and Zambia (2022-2024).

Aligning Paradigm-Policy-Praxis for Enduring Development Transformations

Niti Bhan, Aalto University

Abstract: This paper draws from a design planning study of epistemological paradigms that inform Finland's mode of governance vis-a-vis societal transformations. Previously, for Dutch Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economy, our studies on public-private partnerships (PPPs) in sustainable agricultural value chains (Bhan & Doorneweert 2013; Doorneweert et al. 2014) found that mental models of PPP beneficiaries were obsolete among policymakers resulting in incompatibility between policy and praxis and thus renewal was necessary to align program design with development portfolios. A qualitative evidence synthesis (Grant & Booth 2009:100) surfaced a similar paradigm-policy-praxis gap in Finland, where incompatibility between mode of governance and system-to-be-governed has increased social injustice among marginalized groups (Salmi et al. 2023; Salmi & Svets 2022; Puupponen et al. 2022, 2023), as well as contributing to inequality and inequity (Paukkeri et al. 2023; Fina et al. 2021). This has implications for Finland development portfolio planning.

That is, in Finland, we find it is the mental model of own society which has become obsolete and which hampers the ability to cope with heterogeneity and diversity at the level of policymaking (Pitkänen 2008; Merivirta et al. 2022). This increasingly widening policy-praxis gap has been linked to historical narratives of an exceptionally homogeneous nation (Häkli 2005; Paasi 1997;

Keskinen et al. 2019; Roman et al. 2021). If policymaking's epistemological paradigms are misaligned to the detriment of disadvantaged groups at home (Mustonen 2009; Mustonen & Huusari 2020; Kuokkanen 2007; Berglund 2000), this affects facilitating international societal transformations.

Finnish development research contributes from a robust foundation of experience with cross-cultural collaborations characterized by epistemological plurality and complexity of socio-economic-ecological systems. It is well-positioned to align policy and praxis for the paradigm change of complexity and plurality in turbulent conditions. Increasing coherence will also benefit rural livelihood actors and isolated and marginalized communities in Finland.

Working Group 4: ‘Ecotopias’ of Sustainability: From Maldevelopment to ‘Desirable’ Future Forests

Chair(s):

Ayonghe A. Nebafisu, University of Helsinki
Maria Brockhaus, University of Helsinki

Abstract:

In a 1975 novel “Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston”, Ernest Callenbach envisions a desired state of stability in a future society, not yet utopian but well on the way, characterized by appropriate technology, improved relationships, natural recycling, decentralization, environmental concern, cooperation, and careful planning. The here proposed panel applies this concept to forests in the Global North and South. They feature prominently in Sustainable Development and the related goals (e.g. SDGs 1 No Poverty, 7 Affordable and Clean Energy, 10 Reduced Inequalities, 13 Climate Action, 15 Life on Land, and 16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), yet it seems that maldevelopment in terms of deforestation and biodiversity loss, and processes of recentralization of forest resources are ongoing.

Both the Global North and South, shaped by imperialist legacies pose many barriers to forests and people due to the growing demand for profit in forestry. Conflicts continue to lead serious setbacks, especially for forest-reliant communities. Many actors face the challenge of sustaining the economic values of forests while preserving biodiversity and mitigating climate change. We ask what does a ‘forestopia’ look like, for whom, and what enables or hinders the transition towards a forestopia that features social environmental justice? How can we transition away from these maldevelopments to a forest ecotopia?

The session is designed by collaboration of the [International Forest Policy Research Group](#) and the HELSUS Postdoctoral project “*Future ‘Ecotopias’ of Sustainability in Nordic Forests Systems*”.

Presentations

This WG will have three sessions.

Session 1: Forest policy, extractivism, and collaborative governance

on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 14:00-15:30 during the Working Group Session I.

Ecotopias of Sustainability in Conflict-Prone Forest Policy: A Unifying Negotiation Framework Approach to Forestry and Energy Politics in Somalia and Serbia

Edmund Asare, University of Helsinki

Abstract: This study investigates the complex conflicts within forest policy processes in Somalia and Serbia, two nations with distinct ecological, social, and political landscapes. By using the “Unifying Negotiation Framework (UNF)” as an analytical tool, the research identifies and examines the institutional and social factors that intensify policy conflicts in these regions. The primary research question is: “What are the forest-related conflicts in Somalia and Serbia when interpreted through the lens of the Unifying Negotiation Framework?” Through indepth context analysis, this study sheds light on the dynamics of forest policy conflicts, revealing how a holistic

and context sensitive approach can enhance the management and resolution of conflicts. Data were analyzed using content analysis methods, with attention to the institutional and social contexts that shape these conflicts. The findings underscore the value of selecting appropriate analytical frameworks for managing policy negotiations, especially in conflict-prone settings. This study demonstrates that a holistic approach to conflict analysis—despite situational and cultural differences—can reveal underlying patterns and parallels across diverse regions. As illustrated by the cases of Somalia and Serbia, forest policy developments are influenced not only by changing paradigms within forestry and energy sectors but also by broader structural and ecological shifts, which often bring additional layers of conflict. By exploring these dynamics, the study contributes to the discourse on “Ecotopias of Sustainability” by highlighting the importance of adaptive, context-sensitive policies that aim to balance ecological integrity and sustainable resource management in conflict-affected settings.

Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Areas on Private Lands – Who should pay for the Conservation?

Geethanjali Mariaselvam, University of Helsinki

Abstract: The Protected Area (PA)s around the globe do not sufficiently deliver Biodiversity Conservation initiatives to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. Also, the PA approach (command-and-control mechanism) is insufficient in some contexts as observed in India. Here, because the State-owned PAs are limited, the alternative is to either consider existing conservation areas on private lands or create more PAs on private lands. Biodiversity being a common good for society, there is a need to address the question of how to maintain justice? Who needs to pay for the maintenance of PAs on private lands? Why should individuals bear the cost of conservation for the global cause of reversing climate change? This leads to the discussion of how to create a ‘win-win’ situation for those who benefit from conservation and those who contribute to fostering biodiversity conservation. Using two case studies in Punjab, India we address the above questions with respect to PAs on private lands that support biodiversity conservation yet face many conflicts due to the absence of policy mechanisms that can bring justice for conservation goals. In case study area I, the local people had intrinsic motivation for conservation, which is rather insufficient. Now, they need some extrinsic motivations by means of new policies, payments/ compensation to support them in conservation goals. In case area I, people with intrinsic motivation and higher education were more willing to spare their lands for conservation if compensated adequately. In case study area II, with no intrinsic motivation, conservation is by a legislation, which poses the need for some motivating mechanisms that promote justice. In case area II, local people feel constrained by the legislation and look forward to some easing mechanisms and ecotourism seems to offer some potential for reconciling their economic aspirations with the global conservation goals.

New Global Paradise for Protecting Nature: Excuses for Green Grabbing and Ecological Neoliberal Accumulation in Patagonia

Enrique Aliste Almuna, UMR DEVSOC, Université Paris

Abstract: In the Anthropocene era, Patagonia emerged as a significant "reserve of life" due to its unique ecological conditions, remote location at the southernmost tip of the globe, and the powerful imagery associated with green and ecological discourses. As a result, Patagonia has become a new hotspot for "green grabbing," a phenomenon driven by the concept of private protected areas, which is promoted by the Chilean state.

Wealthy individuals are eager to join the global green elite, while transnational NGOs play a crucial role in facilitating this process. This paper examines and analyzes this phenomenon, defining it as "eco-extractivism." It reveals a complex network that links wealth generated from extractivism and financialization to ecological initiatives in the Global South.

Unpredictability and resilience: perspectives on community-based fire management through participatory mapping in the Southern Highlands, Tanzania

Ida Herdieckerhoff, University of Eastern Finland

Abstract: Globally, the occurrence and magnitude of uncontrolled fires is rising and wreaking havoc on societies, economies and the natural environment. Communities in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania are threatened by rising frequencies and severity of uncontrolled fires. This creates unpredictable futures for local communities, whose forest-dependent livelihoods drive their efforts to adapt to changing fire regimes. Land cover and land use have fundamental impacts on ignition, spread, intensity, severity as well as spatial and temporal patterns of fire. It follows that through strategic land use planning the impacts of fire can be mitigated. The research objective is to develop and test a novel participatory GIS (PGIS) methodology that supports community-based fire management. In this transdisciplinary research project, we conducted PGIS campaigns in three case study villages in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania in 2022. To triangulate research data, we conducted follow-up in-depth interviews with selected key informants in 2024. Local communities have developed practices for using fire as a tool in land management and ways to mitigate adverse impacts of fire. In each PGIS campaign, 18 participants created maps based on printouts of high-resolution satellite images. They mapped and analyzed fire incidences of the past five years, pinpointed lookout points and water sources, identified fire risk areas in the village and determined potential fire breaks to protect assets. The resulting maps were used to create village fire management plans. Based on the data collected during the PGIS campaigns, we critically analyze how PGIS can be used to facilitate the incorporation of local knowledge and practices in land use planning.

Scoping review: Forms of collaboration governance and integrated landscape approach

Irmeli Mustalahti, University of Eastern Finland

Ida Herdieckerhoff, University of Eastern Finland

Anna Mustonen, University of Eastern Finland

Abstract: A need exists globally for a deeper understanding of the tools and practices that support collaborative governance in the integrated landscape approach. To address this gap in research, we conducted a scoping review to identify and synthesize literature related to participatory and collaborative approaches in natural resources governance. Our aim was to learn from the applied tools, practices and processes how they could support the social and societal aspects of the integrated landscape approach. We focused on water, forest, land, and landscapes to limit the scoping review literature search, based on our team members' earlier research experience and the modes of governing these natural resources. Our findings identified a wealth of different tools and practices available to support a collaborative approach, such as participatory mapping and modelling, games and visualizations, scenario development, knowledge co-creation and different practices to support trust building, participation and empowerment. The scoping review findings on practices and processes that are context-sensitive and aligned with collaboration and interdependency show they can support an integrated landscape approach. The core elements of collaborative governance, namely,

principled engagement, shared motivation, and capacity of joint action contributed towards making rules and agreements as well as social learning and a commitment towards integrated landscape approach. We also found that the majority of the practices and processes described in the articles occurred over very short time periods; thus, it was impossible to determine what their social or societal impacts were or whether they resulted in long-term collaborative partnerships. We consider that short term funded and externally driven processes that are often present in natural resources governance will be unable to support collaborative governance making requires administration openness, citizen inclusion, and cross-sectoral collaboration in an integrated landscape approach.

Session 2: Art, ecological care, agency, and education

On Friday 28 February 2025 at 11:00-12:30 during the Working Group Session III.

Care and work in forest conservation and management: approaches from Feminist Political Ecology

Violeta Gutiérrez Zamora, Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE)

Abstract: Political ecologists are increasingly focusing on the fundamental role of care practices and affections in socio natural relationships. As the green economy and market-based forest conservation solutions advance (e.g., carbon credit markets and bioeconomy), it becomes necessary to recognize two key factors. 1) The changes and interlinks between work and notions of nature and sustainability involved in forest conservation and management approaches; and 2) the interweaving between care and violence that such changes may entail.

Theoretically, the manuscript aims to extend the discussions on the production of the means of life and the production of life (care labor) at the intersection of ecological conservation and forest management. It thus addresses questions of ecological care work. Care in socio-ecological relationships is generally described as those attempts to reduce harm and violence on the earth, species, or other human beings. However, many of these attempts may be immersed in oppressive relations based on historically constructed social hierarchies based on gender, ethnicity, class, racialization, and speciesism. Recognizing oppressive relations also reveals the diverse relations and the labor involved between humans and non-human species across different spaces at the local level (the household, the city/village, the cultivation land, the forest). Drawing upon feminist political ecology approaches to the care of life, this manuscript explores how we understand ecological care and its framework while recognizing the power and violence exercised in current forest conservation and management systems. Based on qualitative research conducted in Mexico and Laos PDR, the manuscript explores how care practices, knowledge and affections situated with(in) the forests could escape the imperial gaze of the green economy and the emergent bioeconomy in the so-called Global South.

Seeing the forest for the trees - Slow travel as a way of getting to know forest agencies

Anna-Emilia Haapakoski, University of Lapland

Salla Jutila, University of Lapland

Abstract: In today's societies, where different knowledge structures determine the way of life, people are exposed to time poverty, which leads to superficial engagement and processing of knowledge, feelings of loss of control and placelessness (Oh et al., 2016). The mental desire for slowing down has sparked resistance and even social movements, in response to the practices of a fast-paced society and how they make people feel in relation to themselves and others

(Howard, 2012). What all these have in common is to rethink society through slowness, beyond human-centeredness.

Being tourism researchers, we adapt slow travel as *a way of getting to know* forest agencies and relations. Metaphorically slow travel is often connected with pilgrimage, as the central essence of both seems to lie in the sense of agency and authentic self (Howard, 2012). Slowness here creates a safe space for the self to identify own needs, desires and values. This same agency allows for hope, an active agency to make a better world (Stengers, 2018). Slowing down can also be examined from the perspectives of sensitivity and fragility, in the intertwined relationships of different agencies (Höckert, et al. 2022).

As social scientists, we recognize that tourism plays an important role in contemporary crises. Tourism contributes to climate change and biodiversity loss, while an environmental crisis can cause concern and anxiety in both tourists and researchers examining the phenomenon. This anxiety often arises from a feeling of powerlessness and lack of control: there is an urgent need for action and a desire to act, but no time nor space to get to know how - how together? While tourism can be exploited as a tool for selfish goals, it can have a unique position as an enabler of interaction and ecological appreciation. Here slowing down could create a space for encounters in which different interests, needs, knowledge and ways of being intertwined.

Re-connecting with Trees in Contemporary Southeast Asian Art

Minna Valjakka, University of Helsinki

Abstract: The reciprocal relationships between humans and trees are inherent in Southeast Asian art. The significance of different types of wood in artistic expression is linked to their respective auspicious, protective and practical properties, which are determined by their ecological position in a forest or by spiritual beliefs (e.g. animist or shamanistic traditions). To an extent, the view of trees as the source of life and as fellow beings has been disrupted by the socio-ecological injustices caused by extractivist colonial practices throughout Southeast Asia, including but not limited to forestry, plantation and farming.

Amidst these existing (neo)colonial legacies, contemporary artists are exploring new (im)material methods to reveal, renegotiate and restore the interrelationships between humans, trees and forests. Inspired by genealogies of practice and indigenous knowledge, artists are re-examining the ecological relevance of wood, tree-based materials, and living trees for art, communities and local ecosystems. This paper aims to identify the principal ecocritical artistic methods employed in Southeast Asian art to challenge imperial imagery and its legacies. Drawing on recent discourses on ecocriticism in the region (e.g. Ryan 2018) and the presence of plants in contemporary art (Aloi 2017; Aloi 2019). I suggest that these artists are able to create critical multisensory lexicons to re-establish interconnectedness between humans, trees and forests by reconfiguring the shifting layers of the past, present and future.

Biocultural approaches to environmental education – evidence from 61 education projects across Madagascar

Aina Brias Guinart, University of Helsinki

Abstract: Biocultural approaches are a promising conservation model to foster transformation towards equitable and sustainable futures, and the adoption of rights-based and socially-just conservation models. Biocultural approaches have not yet been studied in the context of environmental education. Environmental education is often used to improve human-

environments relationships in different conservation contexts. Particularly in the Global South, environmental education is a cornerstone of many conservation projects targeting local communities that directly depend on natural resources such as forests. The mainstream conservation agenda has often clashed with local needs, values and knowledges, with education projects being no exception. Education projects led by conservation organizations often reflect colonial legacies and are distant from local cultural realities.

In this article, we propose four key themes that define the characteristics of biocultural approaches to environmental education: place-based learning approaches, local realities, biocultural relations, and inclusive conservation. Through these themes, and drawing on questionnaires and interviews, we examine 61 environmental education projects across Madagascar. Madagascar offers a unique context due to its outstanding levels of both biological and cultural diversity. For decades, the country has been under the conservation spotlight, attracting research, programs and investment, in an effort to alleviate poverty and conserve biodiversity.

Our results illustrate a broad spectrum of learning tools and pedagogical approaches that recognize the interwoven relations between cultural and biological diversity. Yet, ongoing challenges remain, particularly in contexts in which cultural and biological objectives are misaligned. We reflect on current challenges and future opportunities, and we provide examples and recommendations to design education projects that support and strengthen Madagascar's biocultural heritage. This research documents the transformative potential of biocultural approaches in the context of environmental education. These insights highlight that while great advances are being made, there is still a long way ahead to develop culturally grounded education initiatives. We hope that this research inspires thoughts on the transition towards a forest ecotopia and towards more effective, equitable and just interventions in human-environments relationships.

Working Group 5: Development and New Tree-Planting Schemes in the Global South

Chair(s):

Markus Kröger, University of Helsinki
Ossi Ollinaho, University of Helsinki
Sophia Hagolani-Albov, University of Helsinki
Linda Annala, University of Helsinki

Abstract:

There has been a marked rise in the public interest and funding to different kinds of tree-planting schemes in the world in recent years. Common reasons include carbon offsetting, biodiversity offsetting, ecological restoration, as well as agroforestry, food, feed and fuel production as well as biomass and fiber production by tree planting schemes. In this working group, we invite papers discussing the novelties in the politics, political economy and ecology, intersectional dynamics, North-South power relations, financial flows, and development aspects of these schemes and varied parts of the global South.

Presentations

This WG will be held on Friday 28 February 2025 at 11:00-12:30 during the Working Group III.

Tree Planting in the Global South: A Global Level Investigation

Sophia Hagolani-Albov, University of Helsinki
Markus Kröger, University of Helsinki

Abstract: Since 2015, the world has seen a surge of pledges, policies, and projects of ecological restoration, typically different types of tree planting and for carbon capture and food production. Yet, more empirical research needs to be done to uncover what is happening, why, and where. In particular, we are interested to find out how these schemes interrelate with the financial realm, land use conflicts, and power relations. However, it is difficult to find comprehensive information about tree planting at the global level because projects are done by different types of organizations and in different countries. Additionally, the information that the projects share about themselves is usually rather opaque. Often it is difficult to easily find how particular tree planting projects are funded, implemented, or followed up. In this presentation, we will share preliminary results from data collected from over 700 unique tree planting projects using the publicly available data they have self-reported about their projects. This presentation will share some of our preliminary findings, including some general trends we have identified about these tree planting projects.

Community-driven tree planting in Northern Namibia: Determinants and Challenges

Ayu Pratiwi, University of Turku

Co-authors: Sanna Huttunen (University of Turku), Albertina Ndeinoma (University of Namibia), Ndapandula Amuthenu (University of Namibia), Anna-Maria Haufiku (University of Namibia), Kamuhelo Lisao (University of Namibia), Elizabeth Ndeunyema (University of Namibia), Ville Myllynpää (University of Turku)

Abstract: Climate change and environmental degradation are among the most pressing global issues, making tree planting initiatives essential for combating climate change, halting biodiversity loss, and restoring degraded landscapes. However, many tree planting programs face challenges such as planting non-native, potentially invasive species, and disregarding community preferences. This paper examines the determinants and challenges affecting tree planting programs, utilizing a unique dataset from northern Namibia. Using a multilevel logistic regression model, we found that low-income households with larger landholdings are more likely to participate in tree planting initiatives. In contrast, households with members engaged in non-farm employment are less inclined to start or continue planting even when provided with seedlings, as they may prefer more stable and low-risk income streams. We recommend that future tree planting programs align with household preferences for tree purposes and provide sufficient economic incentives to ensure the sustainable maintenance of planted species.

Ecological restoration and peasant struggles in Brazil: reflections on the dilemmas and challenges of disputed land in the Cerrado biome

Francis Barbosa Rocha, University of Brasília
Sérgio Sauer, University of Brasília

Abstract: not available

Green Jobs, Invisible Workers: The Scalar Politics of Restoration Labour in Ethiopia's Forest Restoration Initiatives

Linda Annala Tesfaye, Hanken School of Economics
Matiwos Bekele Oma, University of Bonn

Abstract: Restoring degraded landscapes requires extensive human labour in ecologies across the globe. Yet, restoration is rarely recognized as labour-intensive work. This paper examines the invisibilization of restoration labour within large forest restoration/afforestation projects, focusing on the underpaid contributions of women, landless farmers, and temporary workers. Despite promises of “green jobs” to simultaneously address climate change and unemployment through forest restoration, the labour underpinning restoration efforts remains unseen. Utilizing an analysis grounded in political ecology, we argue that the differentially scaled processes and institutionalized socio-ecological practices that construct ‘green jobs’ are essential to account for invisibilizing the socio-economic toll of restoration work. Through case studies of Ethiopia’s Green Legacy Initiative and the African Great Green Wall project in Ethiopia, we analyze how labour invisibilization is produced and maintained. Our findings from 45 interviews and 17 FGDs reveal how intersecting hierarchies devalue restoration work, while also highlighting the agency and resilience of workers advocating for recognition. By centering labour invisibilization, we aim to reposition restoration labour as a critical issue in climate justice scholarship.

Working Group 6: The Political Economy of Green-Digital Transition

Chair(s):

Edemilson Paraná, LUT University

Rodrigo Santaella Goncalves, LUT University

Thea Yan Pan, LUT University

Abstract:

This panel aims to explore the so-called green-digital (or twin) transition from a political-economic perspective. Current literature on the twin transition tends to follow two main trends. The first is optimistic about the role digitalization can play in advancing the green transition. The second offers a more critical perspective but is often focused on specific cases and limited to the rebound effects of certain digital features, particularly in terms of energy efficiency. Our panel welcomes contributions aligned with both of these trends but is particularly interested in critical perspectives on the twin transition. We encourage submissions that draw from Marxist political economy, heterodox economics, and critical social sciences, emphasizing the conflictual and class-based aspects of social issues. We seek to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue that includes contributions from sociologists, economists, philosophers, political scientists, and scholars from other fields.

Possible topics for discussion include the theoretical and broader implications of digitalization, particularly on labor and capital relations; the geopolitics of AI in the context of the twin transition; public policies related to the green-digital transition and their limitations; and the strategic features of the contemporary green-digital transition in both the Global North and Global South.

Presentations

This WG will have two sessions

Session 1

on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 14:00-15:30 during the Working Group Session I.

Green-digital transition and Global Libidinal Economy

Joel Hänninen, University of Helsinki

Abstract: Last few years have seen a proliferation of discussions relating to green-digital (or twin) transition and its respective policy implications. The twin transition may be generally seen as responding to many timely political-economic issues. Yet, critical questions need to be posed: who gets the spoils of the transition? How does the structural necessity of continued capitalist accumulation, i.e. economic growth, play into all of this? And how does the twin transition tie in with what has been aptly called the “imperial mode of living” (Brand & Wissen 2021), one which calls renewed attention to Global North-Global South relations? Concurrent to the emergence of twin transition, a novel theoretical approach of the “global libidinal economy” (GLE) has emerged. First and foremost advanced by Kapoor et al. (2023), GLE challenges the hegemonic political economy analysis: seeing as unconscious desires play a constitutive role in all human social activity, then they must be present in global politics, too. GLE centres on a desiring subject, one troubled with irrationality and unrestraint, excess and compulsion – instead of one

embracing rationality, composure and perceptiveness. Thus, this proposal takes, along with Brand and Wissen's work, GLE as a central theoretical angle to the critical analysis of the twin transition. It asks: how can the GLE approach benefit the study of the politics of the twin transition? How do our unconscious desires relate to the politics of the twin transition? And lastly, would GLE be able to turn the hindrances it identifies into a critical, emancipatory politics?

Data Extractivism and Social Pollution in Zambia

Christopher Chagnon, University of Helsinki

Abstract: The value of personal data as a resource is undeniable. Although it is not a new resource, the ability to harvest it en masse is a relatively new phenomenon, with companies that deal in data harvesting being some of the most valuable in the world. The push to harvest ever more personal data and maximize profit has led to technology companies employing approaches which are extractivist in nature. Just as extractivist approaches in mining, hydrocarbon extraction, agriculture, agroforestry, and others create environmental pollution, these approaches in the technology sector create what can be thought of as social pollution. Some manifestations of social pollution can be seen as global (tech addiction, political polarization, changes to how individuals engage with the world and communities around them, negative impacts on mental health, etc.), while there are also manifestations which occur primarily in the Global South (loss/marginalization of language and culture, de facto imposed changes to cultures, traditions, and ceremonies, etc.). While countries in the Global North are more valuable for big tech companies, countries in the Global South represent the greatest potential for growth and domination. Like many countries in the Global South, Zambia has seen rapid expansion of internet access and smart devices, and in recent years the Zambian government has grappled with developing and implementing regulations on the technology sector and internet, while also promoting tech sector development as an avenue of national development. This article draws upon dozens of interviews with people working in government, technology, and civil society in Zambia to highlight experiences and changes which can be seen as manifestations of social pollution.

Session 2

on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 16:00-17:30 during the Working Group Session II.

Ant Forest and making of environmental subjects in the digital age

Zhen Zeng, University of Helsinki

Abstract: This paper delves into the dynamics of how FinTech platform capital permeates the sphere of environmental governance, through a critical examination of Ant Forest, a gamified afforestation programme initiated by Alipay which is China's largest FinTech platform. This innovative programme quantifies users' carbon footprints, rewarding their low-carbon actions with tangible real-world trees predominantly planted in the arid areas of Northern China. This study analyses 25 in-depth interviews with Ant Forest users, in-game texts and images, alongside the researcher's own gaming experiences. By drawing on Robert Fletcher's variegated environmentalities approach, I interrogate the multifaceted ways in which Ant Forest shapes environmental discourses, produces and articulates environmental knowledge, employs control and surveillance mechanisms, and creation of digital environmental subjectivities.

The findings suggest a paradoxical relationship between Ant Forest's inherent "platform-based" characteristics and its supposed objectives of promoting carbon literacy and making of calculative subjects for individual carbon management. Moreover, the research highlights a significant aspect of user interaction within the gamified green governmental context, where

trees become objects of intense fetishization in various forms. These phenomena lead to a diminished focus on the broader ecological and social implications of afforestation activities of Ant Forest. Additionally, this trend marks a significant departure from the traditional perspective of public tree planting projects as collective efforts and tools for mass mobilization. Instead, it is increasingly perceived as an individual environmental responsibility, indicating a profound transformation in the cultural and social understanding of environmental restoration in today's Chinese society.

Crafting just green transition? The promise, infrastructure, and labour regime of a 'sustainable' online marketplace

Ilona Steiler, Tampere University

Abstract: In face of labour exploitation and resource extractivism in global value chains, digital platforms have come under critical scrutiny. At the same time, platforms, along with digital infrastructures more broadly, are deemed indispensable for achieving 'green' and 'just' transitions. Against this background, the paper scrutinizes the promise of online platforms to contribute to sustainability transitions. Conceptualizing online platforms as amalgamate of digital and social infrastructure as well as a labour regime (Baglioni et al. 2022), the paper explores the tensions between the objectives of expansion and profit-generation on the one hand, and green and just transition as well as equal market access on the other. Empirically, the paper focuses on Etsy, a key global online market platform explicitly committed to "positive change for small businesses, people, and the planet." In connecting producers and consumers of hand-crafted items, promoting philanthropy and following corporate social responsibility, Etsy presents the online marketplace and 'green craft' as solution to social and environmental challenges. The appeal to creative labour and sustainability hides unequal value capture and a profit structure based on mass production and datafication. However, the diversity among Etsy sellers means that the platform may also benefit sellers who are otherwise disadvantaged, while offering petty accumulation to some. These findings need to be contextualized within wider regulatory frameworks governing small-scale trade and digital labour in the global platform economy, indicating that the potential for green, just and sustainable transition requires strong institutional and political control to counter the negative effects of capitalist profit orientation.

Blockchain and the Digital Green Transition: A Sustainable Solution or an Ecological Pitfall?

Manal Belatik, University of Moulay Ismail

Mustapha Outmane, University of Moulay Ismail

Abstract: Blockchain is often presented as a revolutionary technology that can contribute to the green-digital transition thanks to its ability to improve traceability, optimize processes and reduce waste. However, its adoption in a sustainable context remains open to debate due to the various challenges associated with its use. This study explores the links between the perceived environmental benefits of blockchain, the associated technological constraints, and its adoption in green initiatives. The aim is to understand the factors influencing this adoption and to explore potential barriers.

A preliminary model has been developed based on three main dimensions. The first is the perception of environmental benefits, which include aspects such as improved traceability, optimization of resources and reduction of losses in supply chains. The second is technological constraints, including perceived complexity, cost of implementation and lack of technical skills. Finally, the third dimension is the adoption of blockchain in initiatives aligned with sustainability objectives. A quantitative analysis, combining questionnaires and structural equation models, is planned to explore the relationships between these dimensions.

This study is intended as a contribution to the debate on the role of blockchain in the green-digital transition, highlighting its potential and limitations. It also aims to provide ways of overcoming the barriers to its adoption and maximizing its positive impact on sustainability objectives.

Working Group 7: Reimagining Political Participation in an Age of Geopolitics: Southern Experiences

Chair(s):

Henri Onodera, University of Helsinki

Karim Maïche, University of Lapland

Abstract:

We are living through a period of rapidly exacerbating global inequalities, re-emerging authoritarian populism, environmental crises, and shrinking civic spaces. In the 2020s, some of the major events and divisive processes include the COVID-19 pandemic, climate emergency, wars in Ukraine and Gaza, coup d'états in Africa and elsewhere, and global militarization. The changing geopolitics has accelerated the transition towards a more conflictual and complex world order that has been in the making since the turn of the millennium. The escalated global tensions have underlined the precariousness of global institutional structures of the post-World War II period, including the UN-based multilateral system and Bretton Woods financial institutions.

Against these ruptures, coupled with the globally circulating anti-“West” rhetoric, many countries in the Global South are repositioning and embracing authoritarian and illiberal states, such as China and Russia, as the more compelling partners and funders for their societal projects. For scholars, it is crucial to study what implications do the current geopolitical changes have for political participation, democratic practices and civil society spaces in the Global South. It is often assumed that the weakening of “Western/Northern” hegemony implies an ideological global crisis of liberal democracy. In this working group, we do not directly assume such causalities but, instead, seek to explore what is currently happening in actual practice.

We invite presentations that focus on the Global South and explore the limits and opportunities of political participation in an increasingly complex world order. What are the possible impacts of the shifting global power alliances for civil society actors who seek to protect their rights and build their livelihoods at the local level? Presentations can be either oral presentations or based on submitted papers. In particular, we hope to discuss how the weakening influence of Northern donor agencies, and their liberal discourse of human rights, focus on formal organizations, and conditional financial support, currently shapes new social constellations and civil society formations.

Presentations

This WG will have two sessions.

Session 1: Paper presentation

on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 14:00-15:30 during the Working Group Session I.

Environmental Challenges and Political Fragmentation in Yemen: The Role of Climate Justice and Blue Humanities

Adel Dashela, CGC at Columbia University, Jordan

Abstract: Yemen is one of the undeveloped countries most affected by climate change. The ongoing conflict and the absence of stable state institutions have exacerbated its impacts on the population. In this context, many local and regional actors are trying to reshape Yemen’s political

geography according to their interests. This study explores the effects of climate change on Yemen and discusses how climate justice can be applied to achieve stability and development in the post-war context. It also examines the complex geopolitical dynamics in post-conflict Yemen, focusing on local and regional power struggles and the influence of the emerging field of Blue Humanities. Currently, Yemen is fragmented, and many local actors rule the country, including the internationally recognized Yemeni government, the Southern Transitional Council, the National Resistance Forces, and the Houthi group. These groups, supported by regional powers like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran complicate the political landscape and intensify competition for resources in strategic areas. Additionally, the study shows how the aspirations of regional powers shape these dynamics, particularly in resource-rich regions such as Hadhramaut, Al Mahrah, Al Hudaydah, Bab Al Mandab, and Socotra Island. The study explores water-related issues and their geopolitical implications, offering a perspective on the interplay between environmental challenges and political interactions in Yemen.

Can Nature Speak? Transition to an Ecologically Civilized Society and Explorations on “Buen Vivir” and Biocentrism in Latin America

Juan Gustavo Hernández, Antonio Ruiz de Montoya University, Peru

Abstract: In her influential essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Gayatri Spivak argues that it is impossible for “the subaltern” to speak when the field of inquiry is unable to relate to “otherness” with anything else than its own paradigm. Spivak further claims that knowledge is never innocent and is always operated by Western interests and power. It then seems negligible for the subaltern to “speak” within the phallogocentric framework, as the “subject” is divided by gender, class, caste, region, religion, and other lines, such as the category of “Nature.” In this paper, I present insights on the bio-centric, decentered post-development Latin American narrative of ‘Buen Vivir’ and the ways in which Nature can speak and be lived as an intercultural experience. I argue for the need to legally include Nature’s voices in the transition to an ecologically civilized society, which generally means a transition from anthropocentrism to biocentrism.

From territorial displacements to epistemic displacements: Notes from the South

María Luisa Ballinas Aquino, College of the Southern Border, Mexico

Abstract: The displacements of human populations are increasing throughout the world for different reasons, among which violence stands out in its various forms: extortion, kidnapping, harassment, homicides, etc. These displacements have repercussions on the interaction between people and their environments, which disrupts the cultural activities and solidarity expressions of communities (Garzón and Contreras, 2023); likewise, in contrast, the presence of a territory either in frank recovery due to the absence of human activity or subjected to poorly regulated or unregulated extractions by displacing agents is observed. The displacement referred to the territory leads to epistemic displacements that, constructed from the south, contribute to the sciences of sustainability; on the one hand, the integration of the “sentipensares” (Fals Borda, 2009); On the other hand, there is a shift from knowledge that emerges from positivism to knowledge that is interested in integrating the various areas of reality (Brown, 2009).

In this context, the question arises as to what are the scope and limits of research carried out on displacement? How pertinent is the publication of experiences and situations of displacement with the name of the people and/or communities to whom it refers? In this sense, the epistemic displacement proposed from the south considers both the importance of the construction of

knowledge, know-how and feelings; as well as the ethical commitment to the social actors linked to the displacements studied.

Engaging with communities of everyday peace practice in pursuit of a radical transformation of liberal peacebuilding

Vadim Romashov, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

Abstract: This presentation is a self-reflexive conceptual thinking of how ethnographic research on everyday conviviality in rural communities affected by ethno-nationalist frames of a regional conflict can inform the action aimed at subverting the dominance of the epistemic communities of liberal peacebuilding. While truly collaborative action research is not always possible in ethnography with rural communities due to structural constraints, such as lack of resources and, more importantly, systemic prejudices about “rural people’s” agency for social change, I argue that there is at least some scope for translating their communal epistemes of coexistence into the actions of peace activists. These actions, informed by the communalist paradigm, must aim to demolish “the whole edifice of an epistemic community, founded upon liberal democracy and capitalism” (Richmond, 2008) rather than to find a niche within it. This shift implies abandoning the misconception that it is possible to create alternatives to (neo)liberal peacebuilding by acting from within its institutions and consortia. The critical discussion is based on my original ethnographic research in Armenian-Azerbaijani rural communities in Georgia, as well as my concurrent personal experience of working with internationally sponsored peacebuilding in the context of the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict and beyond.

Session 2: Project presentation

on Friday 28 February, 2025, at 11:00-12:30 during the Working Group Session III.

Project launch: Tactical agency and reimagining democratic participation in a multiplex world: Southern experiences (TACTS)

Henri Onodera (PI), University of Helsinki

Karim Maïche, University of Lapland

Usman Ashraf, University of Helsinki

Anna Salmivaara, University of Helsinki

Yahia Benyamina, University of Helsinki

Abstract: Global geopolitics is undergoing dramatic changes. The transition to a more conflictual and complex world order, and increasingly critical views about liberal ‘Western’ values, has turned many countries of the Global South to BRICS and authoritarian states as partners and funders for their societal projects. The TACTS project analyses the implications of the shifts in global alliances for democratic imagination, practices and spaces in the Global South. Focusing on four fence-sitter countries, Algeria, Cambodia, Pakistan, and Tunisia, it analyses the local civil society dynamics and the activists’ pursuits of democratic participation around the issues of environmental justice, labour rights, sustainable livelihood and anti-racism.

The project is funded by the Kone Foundation, and it represents a qualitative, interdisciplinary research practice that combines insights from development studies, political science, political sociology and political anthropology.

In this session, we discuss the TACTS project and its objectives. The project members will also introduce their case studies. Warmly welcome!

Working Group 8: Reflections on Hope and Resistance in Times of ‘Un-ness’

Chair(s)

Caecilia Svop Jensen, Tampere University

Bayan Arouri, Tampere University

Ebru Sevik, Tampere University

Meeri Tiensuu, Tampere University

Abstract:

What can hope and resistance teach us about social change? In the context of waste, wars and maldevelopment, there is a need to reflect on forms of resistance and practices of hope in everyday life. We live today in what Aradau (2014) describes as a contemporary era of ‘un-ness’ – uncertainty, unpredictability and unknowability which affects how people resist and hope. While resistance and practices of hope have the potential to drive social change, their forms and impacts remain underexplored. In this explorative workshop we invite participants to reflect on the concepts of hope and resistance as a source of knowledge and their potential to challenge excluding oppressive and exploitative structures and situations of violence, wars and discrimination. We believe that these aspirations hold the potential to transform hope into (political) agency. Resistance and hope are sources of social change that can positively influence individuals and communities.

In conjunction with DevDays25 Conference, this workshop aims to foster dialogue and interaction around the following question: *How do different forms of resistance and practices of hope intersect during these uncertain and challenging times?* Workshop participants will have the opportunity to share their experiences and reflect on how human interactions serve as an intersection of resistance and hope. The goal of the workshop is to facilitate collaborative learning and co-create knowledge on these themes, drawing from diverse perspectives. Please note that the workshop is discussion-based and does not intend to accept formal paper submissions. Instead, it encourages active participation from individuals interested in co-learning, discussion and reflection on these critical topics.

This workshop is facilitated by the [research group Forms of Resistance & Practices of Hope \(FoRE/HOPE\) from Tampere University](#).

This WG will be held on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 16:00-17:30 during the Working Group Session II.

Working Group 9: Arts-based Research and Research-based Art in Global Climate Politics: Diverse Ways of Knowing Maldevelopment and Imagining (still) Possible Climate Futures

Chair(s)

Verena Gresz, University of Tübingen

Riccarda Flemmer, University of Tübingen

Abstract:

This working group brings together knowledge producers at the intersections of art, academia and UNFCCC international climate policy-making for a trans-disciplinary exchange on how to make maldevelopment in global climate politics visible and discuss strategies for imagining transitions into (still) possible climate futures. Alliances between science and art have been recognized by Climate Justice scholars, NGO networks and UN bodies alike to be necessary to inform more critical and practice-based understandings of the harmful impacts of climate change. Especially the role of culture and art in the co-production of climate change knowledge, grounded in the lived experiences of those most affected by environmental crises, has become a central concern for academic reports as well as to translate these outputs into climate policies. Finding new answers to the question of how to put climate action to work therefore requires to critically rethink the current ways of how to make the lived experiences of environmental harm “known” in global politics. How do science, politics, artistic practices, and other ways of knowing, such as Indigenous Knowledge relate to each other within the current UNFCCC climate regime?

The working group is guided by the following questions:

- How do science, politics and artistic practices relate to each other within the current UNFCCC climate regime?
- How political are climate science and artistic practices within the UNFCCC or should/shouldn't be?
- How scientific are artistic practices addressing global climate politics or should be?
- What roles do art and culture play in knowing maldevelopment in the context of the UNFCCC climate regime?
- Who engages in research-based art and arts-based research in the context of the UNFCCC climate regime and who are their audiences?
- Where does research-based art and arts-based research on global climate politics take place and what kind of spaces do practitioners occupy?
- How can alliances between scientific and artistic practices help to address and expose maldevelopment in the UNFCCC and imagine alternative pathways towards (still) possible climate futures?

Presentations

This WG will be held on Friday 28 February 2025 at 13:30-15:00 during the Working Group Session IV.

Ways of Repair: Loss and Damage

Lena Dobrowolska & Teo ORMOND-Skeaping

Abstract: Lena Dobrowolska and Ormond-Skeaping will present insights from their latest project Loss and Damage : Ways of Repair which they co-conducted together with Phoebe-Lin Elnan, writer and performer of the slow as possible collective from Geneva. The **Ways of Repair : Loss and Damage** project is an online artistic research residency aimed at facilitating a transdisciplinary exchange around the issue of [loss and damage](#) caused by the climate crisis. Throughout the year-long research residency, the selected artists and/or curators have been supported in their engagement with the issue of loss and damage and encouraged to spend time exploring and developing their artistic and/or curatorial practice in dialogue with other cultural practitioners as well as a global community of climate change researchers, policymakers, advocates, activists, and negotiators, working on Loss and Damage and the policies and plans developed to address issues of environmental harm.

Worldmaking through art and cultural strategy

Ashish Ghadiali

Abstract: The dominant paradigm in climate action, as exemplified by the UNFCCC’s Art Charter for Climate Action [established in November 2022], posits a role for art rooted in its power “to inspire climate action beyond the sector”. My argument is that this approach fundamentally misrecognizes the capabilities of artists whose power often lies less in corporate communications and positive messaging than in an idiosyncrasy of self-expression through which systemic failings are exposed and alternative futures can be intimated. Referencing Adom Geatchew’s *Worldmaking After Empire* (2020), I will discuss the process through which early 20th century literary and artistic movements such as the Harlem Renaissance in the USA and the Negritude movement in the French Caribbean helped to shape a collective conscience that in turn gave rise to decolonial political movements and the emergence of a New International Economic Order. By relinquishing the role of illustrator or cheerleader that some would like to confer upon us in this time of planetary crisis, artists can, I suggest, free themselves up to attend more closely on their more vital function: namely, to imagine the world anew.

Climate Reassemblies

Jayne Carrick

Abstract: In late 2023 a UK regional government (South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority) conducted a citizens’ assembly on climate. One hundred citizens of South Yorkshire came together over four weekends to learn and deliberate on climate action. They produced 33 recommendations. Climate ReAssemblies posed the question, ‘what next?’. Drawing on the work of the Culture and Climate Change public engagement series (Tyszczuk) that has sought to innovate models of climate research (Scenarios (2016–2017), Narratives (2013–2014), and Recordings (2010–2011)), we worked with a small group of citizens to create scenarios based on the assembly recommendations. This approach challenged the status quo by taking the ‘what next’ question out of the sole purview of policy makers and elites. It proposed a methodology for meaningful engagement that invited citizens to co-produce visions for climate action, which value their lived experiences and knowledge of where they live. The aim was to inspire hope and action in the face of seemingly insurmountable, global climate issues. The scenarios were made into animations and included in an interactive documentary. To demonstrate this novel and creative methodology we propose to engage the audience in a ‘quick fire’ scenario building exercise. Online attendees will be divided into small groups and asked to envisage how recommendations from the South Yorkshire Citizens’ Assembly on Climate could be

implemented into their lives. We will show animations within the interactive documentary to demonstrate examples of the process and inspire the audience.

Policy-Oriented Art: Developing International Norms in Diplomatic Venues

Hannah Entwisle Chapuisat

Abstract: Artists have long created and exhibited artworks in the context of intergovernmental conferences, which convene diplomats, UN representatives, non-governmental organizations, and other observers. However, research in art and visual histories has not yet reflected on the influence of art on these international policymakers, nor how debates on the site-specificity of socially engaged art practices apply to intergovernmental conferences. Notably, psychologists have studied the potential impact of art as a form of communication about climate change in generating public awareness about climate change issues, including at ArtCOP21, but not art's influence on international policymakers who ultimately develop and agree upon international law and policy. Within the field of international relations, scholars increasingly explore the representation of international relations through aesthetic means, which they observe can serve as interpretive tools to understand global politics. However, these emerging insights have not been applied to understanding the potential influence of art as part of the promotion of international norms (minimum agreed standards for state action) in diplomatic venues. To help bridge these gaps, my research seeks to increase understanding about the neglected issue of how art can contribute to political change in the form of international laws and policies that address critical global challenges, like climate change and displacement. In particular, my research explores the possibilities and consequences of what I call "policy-oriented art" and "policy-oriented curating," which focus on exhibiting art for international policymakers within diplomatic venues as compared to "white cube activist" curatorial strategies that address the public at large from within art institutions.

Working Group 10: Transitions in Youth and Student Movements: From Students Against Cuts to Students for Palestine

Chair(s):

Keho ry (contact person: Johanna Airaksinen, University of Helsinki)

Abstract:

The Student Association for Global Development Studies (Kehitystutkimuksen opiskelijat/Keho ry) organizes and moderates an activist forum with participants from the Students for Palestine movement in Finland. Participants from the movement will touch upon topics such as student activism and motivations and objectives in activism. The movement's on-going activism, in the form of demonstrations, petitions and encampment in campuses, has been connecting local students to global crises and decolonial struggles, as well as highlighting the relation between students and universities.

This WG will be held on Friday 28 February, 2025, at 11:00-12:30 during the Working Group Session III.

Working Group 11: Transitioning from Global Inequalities: The Role of Institutions in Development

Chair(s):

Young Scholars Initiative

Abstract:

The challenges of understanding the fundamentals of economics on a global scale are well illustrated by the difficulties—and often failures—of transplanting successful policies from one country to another. While many of these policies, such as a focus on education or infrastructure, have substantially improved the prosperity of nations, new problems, like brain drain or debt crises, cast these once-universal solutions in a less favorable light. Moreover, they leave open the question: how can a developing society be transformed into a developed one?

With the awarding of the 2024 Nobel Prize in Economics for the study of the disparities in prosperity between nations and the role of institutions in this process, it is now more important than ever to open space for academic research that moves beyond the Euro/North Atlantic perspective and creates an economy for—and with—all.

This WG will have two sessions.

Session 1 will be held on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 16:00-17:30 during the Working Group Session II.

Session 2 will be held on Friday 28 February 2025, at 13:30-15:00 during the Working Group Session IV.

Working Group 12: Infrastructures, Movements, and Waste under Illiberal Capitalism and Imperialism: Stories from the Global South

Chair(s):

Iqra Anugrah, Leiden University

Rachma Lutfiny Putri, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Bariş Eser, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Abstract:

Recent developments in global capitalism have been marked by major crisis-ridden economic and political conjunctures. Post-pandemic economic “recovery” continues to benefit the few at the expense of the working people. Simultaneously, authoritarian and right-wing populist turns have been eroding democratic rights and spaces. More recently, Israel’s war on Gaza shows the not-so-hidden face of Western imperialism. Understanding these processes, therefore, becomes an analytical and political imperative.

Of relevance is the workings of contemporary capitalist development and imperialist dynamics in three areas: 1) infrastructure, which has attracted considerable investment from Western countries, China, and emerging/sub-imperial powers, 2) social movements, which continue to resist state power and capital expansion, and 3) waste, which is not merely discarded materials but rather a major commodity with a massive market. These three lenses offer a meso-perspective to understand the political economy of development and its manifestation in everyday life, allowing us to link macro-processes with more micro-level case studies especially from the Global South, where contradictions of development feature most prominently.

This working group, organized as a panel inviting paper submissions and showcasing academic and activist works, invites contribution on these themes from a wide interdisciplinary, critical perspective. Topics currently covered in this panel include the evolution of anti-authoritarian and anti-neoliberal discourses in East/Southeast Asian social movements, waste capitalism/imperialism in Indonesian cities, and post-disaster infrastructural politics in Turkey. We are open to organize a hybrid panel and keen to host two panel sessions, depending on the number of panel participants. We welcome submissions on the mobility and transnational flows of different forms of materialities: capital, commodities, connections across Global North/South divides, programmatic ideas, networks, people, and waste, from a critical political economy perspective. We accept a range of paper formats such as analytical ruminations, case studies, preliminary findings, and activist/field reflections. Participation from comrades from the Global South and marginalized class, gender, and cultural backgrounds (broadly defined) is especially encouraged.

Presentations

This WG will have three sessions.

Session 1: Infrastructures

on Thursday 27 February 2025 at 14:00-15:30 during the Working Group Session I.

Hopeless Modernism within the Disjunctive Urban Modernity of Turkey: A Study of Urban Planners in the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality

Bariş Eser, Vrije_Universiteit Amsterdam

(Co-author: Dimitris Dalakoglou, Vrije_Universiteit Amsterdam)

Abstract: This study focuses on the imaginaries of progressive urban planners as revealing of the changes to Turkey's disjunctive modernity. We present findings from ethnographic fieldwork conducted with urban professionals in the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, offering insights into the zoning department, the progressive Cittaslow department, and the reactions of these city planners to the catastrophic earthquakes of February 2023.

Urban planning professionals exhibit a characteristic we term *hopeless modernism*, defined by their attachment to statist symbolic power despite being overshadowed by the symbolic and economic dominance of a state whose legitimacy they openly question. Unlike the socialist Ankara Chamber of Architects of the 1970s, who formed alliances within *gecekondus* (slum neighborhoods), today's progressive urban professionals cannot draw symbolic power from an alternative modernity capable of uniting diverse classes in urban struggles.

This leaves them trapped in the dialectic between symbolic capital and economic capital, which diminishes the use-values inherent in their work and the city. However, their response to the February 2023 earthquakes provides a potential alternative, demonstrated through their opposition to the state and their self-organized relief efforts.

"One Minute of Fame": The Social Climbing Illusion on the Internet

Daisy Indira Yasmine, Vrije_Universiteit Amsterdam

Abstract: This research examines digital engagement and digital outcomes among the marginalized urban youth in Indonesia. It contributes to the ongoing digital inequality debate on who benefits more from the Internet. Does digital engagement only perpetuate existing social stratification that results in the social reproduction of social inequality, or can it become an agency to empower the lower classes to change their social conditions?

To answer these questions, this study examines the case of "Citayam Fashion Week," a viral street-style fashion show in Indonesia during June – August 2022, where the network of relations between the city beautification structure in Jakarta, railway networks, social media technologies, marginal cultures, the youth from the city outskirts, and other actors created a new assemblage that momentarily disrupted the existing social structure.

Citayam Fashion Week turns the idea of a conventional, high-class fashion show upside down. This street-style fashion show displayed mundane activities by marginalized, lower-class youth from peripheral areas in Jakarta such as hanging around and crossing the crosswalk, making them extraordinary and thereby changing the lives of these "models" showing their neighborhood-style fashion on the street "catwalk." On the surface, this case shows that the Internet offers these marginalized youth opportunities to improve their lives and be recognized.

But is it the case? All the actors involved in this fashion have different interpretations of this new trend in Jakarta's street culture but share the same primary interest: material benefits.

On the internet, marginality or marginal culture becomes a valuable commodity. The internet and social media facilitate and unite all components and actors by creating a momentary social network (hashtag) to exchange content commodities. The social media interaction blurs the borders of social classes. This begs some questions: What challenges do the marginalized youth face when they are involved in this momentary social network? How does this momentary social mobility impact their life and society? Lastly, this research suggests that the internet amplifies social inequality by requiring certain digital resources and internet skills to sustain social mobility. Without digital capability, marginalized youth and their fashion style would only become social media contents and commodities.

Wasted Labor and Digital Infrastructure: Exposing Inequalities in Rural Digital Migration through Sadbor's TikTok Case

Khalid Syaifullah, Surabaya State University

Abstract: The arrest of Gunawan 'Sadbor', a former tailor hailing from a precarious rural household in West Java, allegedly for promoting online gambling through *TikTok*, has sparked a public controversy in Indonesia. Many argue that this reflects legal injustice, as prominent celebrities engaging in the promotion of online gambling remains untouched. This disparity highlights what many see as the disparity of Indonesia legal system that is, to use the local proverb, "sharp downwards (toward the poor), blunt upwards (toward the rich)."

Apart from the question of the rule of law, Sadbor's case also reveals the entanglement between rural poverty, wasted labor, and class contradictions in digital infrastructures. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Indonesia, Sadbor, struggling with his mobile tailoring service, turned to online streaming with *TikTok* and successfully generated income, inspiring his fellow villagers to try their luck in the digital industry. His village, known for its mangosteen and cassava *cracker* commodities, gained the nickname "*Kampung TikTok*" (*TikTok Village*) with the tagline "*Beras Habis, Live Solusinya*" (No Rice, Go Live [on TikTok]). However, due to the inequitable land distribution, villagers like Sadbor—mostly farm laborers, smallholders, and those laid off from the urban jobs—find it challenging to rely on agriculture alone to meet their needs. They have no access to make a living in the agricultural sector, making their labor wasted.

The villagers' turn to digital content creation seems like a logical choice. Alas, it turns out to be exploitative and dangerous, especially for small-scale creators vulnerable to manipulation by larger corporations and other predatory actors in the digital business. Sadbor and his fellow members of the rural poor with limited digital literacy have become easy targets for low-cost ads by online gambling companies. These companies exploit their 'digital labor', i.e. their hard work to gain *followers* and *subscribers*, which is extracted cheaply by gambling owners and bosses. As a result, Sadbor and other rural poor content creators have to face unexpected legal consequences. Sadbor's experience epitomizes the struggle of the rural poor in seeking livelihood and escaping poverty through informal sectors, in this case, the digital industry, only to experience further exploitation and legal troubles rather than an improved life.

Session 2: Waste

on Friday 28 February 2025, at 11:00-12:30 during the Working Group Session III.

Plastics as a Global Artifact in Thailand

Achmad Firas Khudi, Chiang Mai University

Abstract: Thailand's recycled plastics remain as an unfinished contentious juncture between the embeddedness of local and global actors. A public outcry occurred in 2018 when 500 plastic waste containers amounting to around 10,000 tons of plastic waste from 35 countries, including big polluters such as China, Japan, and the United States settled in the Laem Chabang Port. Using this vignette as a starting point, this study problematizes the meaning of plastic as a global artifact involving states and local actors within the confines of global capitalism and environmental systems. Bruno Latour's theory on actors and environmental justice is applied in this case to unveil a range of parties with their insights and roles in plastic recycling in Thailand.

This research uses a critical analysis and interpretation of relevant documents, namely newspaper archives and studies on plastics in Thailand, to make sense of this phenomenon. It concludes that China's global power over the plastic industry contributes to the Thai government's postponement of the plastic ban due to the recycling industry's profit loss and the lack of capacity to reject imported plastic. At the same time, the collective resistance of civil society against plastic usage remains high. Civil society pushes for ecological concerns and modernization to lessen plastic consumption and dependence, whereas the Thai government continues to apply a selective, partial policy framework that is centered on the continuing consumption of plastic products. This study also suggests that a comprehensive framework, from both analytical and political viewpoints, is needed to address the emerging problems and conflicting discourses regarding plastic products and consumption.

Debilitating Domestic Duties: Precariousness of Female Waste Pickers in Indonesia

Rachma Lutfiny Putri, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

(Co-author: Freek Colombijn, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam)

Abstract: Gender differences in the work of female and male waste pickers have often been overlooked. In this paper we want to show that for waste pickers in Indonesia there are remarkable similarities between female and male waste pickers. At first sight, there is practically no division of tasks between female and male waste pickers. Nevertheless, the domestic chores of women, gendered differences in stigmatisation, and possible societal expectations about the compatibility of waste picking with femininity do seriously hamper their work as waste pickers. A better understanding of how waste picking is done is important because the activity is a key step in recycle chains in the Global South. We also warn against the generic use of the term 'waste picker' without carefully distinguishing between their different roles in the municipal waste management assemblage. This paper advances this argument based on a combined fieldwork of 29 weeks mostly in Surabaya but also in Semarang between 2009-2024 and three months in South Jakarta in 2023.

Session 3: Movements

On Friday 28 February 2025 at 13:30-15:00 during the Working Group Session IV.

Paths Towards Success in Forest Conservation: Learning from Rhino Ark in Kenya

Denis Ruyschaert, Graduate Institute

(Co-authors: Guilherme De Franco Damasceno E Souza, Ashwathy Sunilkumar, Pietro Ferdinando Massara)

Abstract: The widespread loss of primary tropical forests continues at a steady rate of 4 million hectares per year, with dramatic impacts on biodiversity, climate and local livelihoods. Tropical forests and their local communities are disappearing. Top-down global development, embedded in a neo-colonial liberal paradigm, is often to blame. To stop this, there is a growing international consensus to work directly with communities in a local development paradigm as a new bottom-up approach to forest conservation. But the top-down development paradigm remains the overall global development framework. As a result, the local development model often remains wishful thinking, and forest projects tend to fail in the long term. How can we overcome this?

To answer this fundamental question for forest conservation, this research focuses on unique approach to forest conservation in Kenya - specifically in the Mt. Kenya and Aberdare regions - led by Rhino Ark, a non-governmental organisation (NGO). Combining historical data and field research, we focus on the root causes of their twenty-year success story.

We find that Rhino Ark's success was due to a number of key factors, including very long-term (two decades) engagement with national institutions, clear objectives and the ability to respond quickly to social, political and environmental changes. This fostered socio-political, institutional-legal and financial stability for the forest conservation initiative. Rather than negating the post-colonial liberal development paradigm, the NGO successfully acted as a mediator between the two paradigms. It acquired resources from the neoliberal development paradigm (e.g., finance, technology, information, law) and redistributed them locally to strengthen local governance. As a result, it defended communities against top-down development (e.g., new roads), secured long-term community funding through 'environmentally friendly' safaris, developed an early warning system against poaching, and fenced the forest with community support.

Critical Scholars as Professional Managerial Class: A Structural and Personal Reflection from Indonesia and Beyond

Iqra Anugrah, Leiden University; CEU Democracy Institute

Abstract: Critical scholars, intellectuals, and activists are often seen as the vanguards of intellectual rigor, moral integrity, and left-leaning/left-liberal politics. In particular, their trajectories tend to be examined from a sympathetic lens: as supporters of lower-class social movements. Unfortunately, this approach overlooks the varied agency of these critical scholars and their complex relationship with the very movements that they often claim to represent. It obscures their unequal socioeconomic status and cultural gap with the movements they engage with. This is not to dismiss their contribution or deny the reality of state repression against some of them, but a more grounded, sober approach in studying these cognitive workers and their role is needed.

This study investigates the value-appropriating, politically-moderating, status-seeking tendency in some parts of critical knowledge production and scholar-activism. It advances several claims. First, the increasing neoliberalization of the research sector exacerbates the process of class differentiation among critical scholars, intellectuals, and activists. The majority join the swelling rank of precarious cognitariat, whereas a selected stratum becomes part of the professional managerial class. Second, the latter stratum contains new intellectual and scholar-activist actors who enjoy economic, cultural, and even political benefits from their advantaged position at the expense of precarious scholars and marginalized communities, as exemplified in their public celebrity status or appointment into policymaking decisions. Lastly, as an illustration and a form of self-criticism, I interrogate my own position as an early-career researcher of Indonesian politics, show my own complicity in the neoliberal research industrial complex as a reluctant member of the professional managerial class, and reflect on possible ways out of this politico-intellectual impasse.

Shifting Strategies and Tactics of the Indigenous Peoples' Movements during Jokowi's Second Term

Rizqan Kariema Mustafa, Pena Umat

(Co-author: Rusman Nurjman, Pena Umat)

Abstract: In contemporary Indonesia, indigenous peoples' struggles involve complex interactions among community groups, including elites, government authorities, NGOs, and other societal elements (Simanjuntak & Siscawati, 2023). This study examines how indigenous peoples defend their customary forests and assert territorial claims (Siscawati, 2023; Zulkarnain, 2017; Henley & Davidson, 2007) and argues that such struggles can be seen as a form of anti-authoritarian, anti-neoliberal resistance against the Indonesian state, particularly under Jokowi's administration.

Indigenous peoples' movements have resisted market-driven state agendas by advocating for recognition and ancestral land ownership (Duille, 2021; Tyson, 2010; Moniaga, 2007). For instance, the establishment of AMAN (*Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara*, The Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago) during the early democratic transition period consolidated indigenous groups across Indonesia (Tamma & Duille, 2020; Bedner & Arizona, 2019).

However, development policies under Jokowi's presidency, including food estate projects, infrastructural expansion, and large-scale nickel mining funded by Western and Chinese companies and states, have increasingly threatened indigenous communities. The Jokowi administration promoted and implemented these extractivist policies in the name of post-Covid-19 economic recovery (Mongabay, 2024; Chelsey et al., 2023; Dinata et al., 2020; Arif & Nugroho, 2020).

Jokowi's second term represents a resurgence of authoritarianism, marked by increasingly restrictive democratic spaces, diminished government accountability through lawfare, and suppression of democratic opposition. Such practices were evident in the 2017 regional elections, the 2019 general election, and the post-Covid-19 governance under a "repressive pluralist" regime that centralized power through personalist leadership (Asrinaldi & Yusoff, 2023; Taufik et al., 2023; Pepinsky, 2021; Power, 2018).

This study aims to demonstrate the shift in strategies and tactics employed by the indigenous peoples' movement in response to Jokowi's authoritarian developmentalist agenda during his

second term. This marked a significant shift from their earlier strategy during Jokowi's first term, when they supported his presidency as a way to advance their goals.

Pre-conference Programme 26.2.2025

Master's Workshop 2025: Navigating the road to completion

Objective: This workshop aims to guide master's students to identify and address challenges encountered during writing a thesis, while fostering a collaborative environment that enables them to deliver constructive critics and feedback on their peers' research papers. However, as the workshop will focus on thesis abstracts, participants must have a clear and coherent idea for their thesis.

The workshop is free of charge and will last for three hours. The participants can join the workshop in person or online. The workshop is facilitated by doctoral researchers **Martta Kaskinen, Emilio Del Pupo** and **Viliina Kaikkonen**. Additionally, some semifinalists of the UniPID Master's Award 2024 will be participating and contributing to the workshop. The workshop is organized by the Finnish Society for Development Research (FSDR) and Finnish University Partnerships for International Development (UniPID).

DocShop 2025: Researching with the Global South: Methods, Fieldwork and Ethics

Objective: This DocShop encourages doctoral researchers to reflect on methodological approaches with ethical considerations in conducting research and fieldwork with/in the Global South. The focus will be on the methodology chapter of the candidate's dissertation. The event includes a keynote roundtable of PhD Supervisors. Following this, small group learning workshops will be held in breakout rooms, where respective supervisors will provide feedback on the pre-assigned papers for submission and where doctoral researchers also discuss with their peers.

Experienced researchers will serve as supervisors for DocShop 2025:

- **Irmeli Mustalahti** (Professor of Natural Resource Management at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Economics, University of Eastern Finland)
- **Sabaheta Ramcilovic-Suominen** (Associate Research Professor in International Forest Policy and Governance at Luke - the Natural Resources Institute Finland)
- **Markus Kröger** (Professor of Global Development Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki)
- **Anja Nygren** (Professor of Global Development Studies and Director of the PSRC at the University of Helsinki)

The workshop is organized by the Finnish Society for Development Research (FSDR), Finnish University Partnership for International Development (UniPID) and the Doctoral Programme of Political, Societal and Regional Changes (PSRC) at the University of Helsinki.

Public Forum: Critical perspectives on wars, mal/development and liberation in the global Middle East

Across the globe, challenges related to mal/development, wars and liberation are intertwined with global capitalism, militarism and geopolitics. This is also evident in the Middle East, where decades of conflict(s) have exposed the intricate intersections of war, development and societal transformation(s). Simultaneously, decolonization movements underscore the critical role of intersectionality as ways to imagine and achieve liberation.

This discussion aims to unpack the connections between liberation and decolonization, with a focus on drawing from perspectives of waste, wars and maldevelopment. The speakers explore how these dimensions interplay with gender, agency, and societal structures, particularly highlighting the gendered dynamics and liberation movements. By situating the discussion within the broader context of global capitalism and geopolitics, this conversation seeks to analyze how these forces have influenced development transitions in the Middle East. By addressing both structural and individual dimensions, the discussion seeks to foster an intersectional dialogue that connects the concepts of development and liberation.

The event is organized by the University of Eastern Finland, the Finnish University Partnership for International Development and Finnish Society for Development Research. The invited speakers are Associate Professor **Alina Sajed** (McMaster University), Visiting Professor **Ali Kadri** (Sun Yat-Sen University) and Researcher **Antti Tarvainen** (Finnish Institute in the Middle East; University of Helsinki). The event will be moderated by **Lili De Paola**.

The event is free of charge and open for all. It is a part of the Development Days 2025 conference, and it will be held on 26 February 2025 at 17:00-19:00 at the Helsinki Think Corner (Yliopistonkatu 4, Helsinki).



Critical perspectives on wars, mal/development and liberation in the global Middle East



Alina Sajed



Ali Kadri



Antti Tarvainen



Lili De Paola

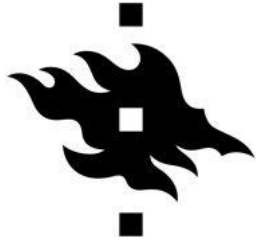


In collaboration with

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- **Eija Ranta's Research Project (Grant No. 1362492)**
Social Justice and Raciality in Post-utopian Latin America – Research Council of Finland
Using ethnographic methods and in close collaboration with antiracist activists, this research project investigates how racialized citizens encounter, maneuver, and tackle everyday prejudices and institutional racism in societies with a strong collective ethos of class-based equality.

Read more: [Social Justice and Raciality in Post-utopian Latin America – Research Council of Finland](#)
- **Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki**
[Faculty of Social Sciences | University of Helsinki](#) is a leading institution in social science research and education in Finland.
- **HELSUS – Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science**
[Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science | University of Helsinki](#) is a cross-faculty research unit in sustainability science within the University of Helsinki.
- **TSV – Federation of Finnish Learned Societies**
The Federation of Finnish Learned Societies (TSV) is an independent expert body on matters related to scientific research and science policy in Finland. Its mission is to promote collaboration among scientific communities; scientific communication and publishing activities; and the dissemination and societal application of research knowledge. Read more: [Tieteellisten seurain valtuuskunta | tsv.fi](#)
- **UEF – University of Eastern Finland**
University of Eastern Finland – (www.uef.fi) is a multidisciplinary university focusing on research, sustainability, and education across various fields.
- **UniPID – Finnish University Partnership for International Development**
[Finnish University Partnership for International Development](#) is a network of Finnish universities dedicated to advancing interdisciplinary studies, research, and societal impact while fostering partnerships that promote global sustainable development.
- **YSI-INET – Young Scholars Initiative**
[YSI-INET](#), supported by the Institute for New Economic Thinking, fosters collaboration among young economists and researchers from across the globe to rethink global economic challenges.



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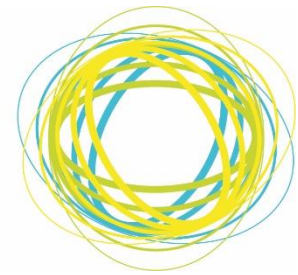
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