

Call for Papers

ESSA Conference 09.-11.10.2024

Section of Development Sociology and Social Anthropology (ESSA)

German Sociological Association (DGS)

Chair of Critical Development Studies Southeast Asia, Passau University

‘Development’

Alternatives of Envisioning Futures in Academia, Activism and Development Cooperation

Building upon the inspiring ESSA Conference 2023 on “Knowledge production in and about ‘development’” at the Department of Development Studies, University of Vienna, we aim to continue the debate on our very subject matter development.

The canon of sociology and social anthropology have ever since played their parts in conceptualizing development, the ‘Other’ and particular pathways to modernity. Despite questioning the universality of classical sociological imaginations and calling for socio-historical contextualization, development sociology, nevertheless, remained a child of its time: embedded in a Western-centric social ontology of world history and future.

In the context of geopolitical rearmament, wars, climate change and environmental degradation, and overall alarmingly growing global social inequalities, academia, activism and development cooperation search for alternatives:

- **In academia**, e.g. postcolonial and decolonial studies call for a rethinking and rewriting of the past and future pathways by situating development as a historical project in the legacy of colonial and in the situated history of modernity. Furthermore, post-human approaches and new materialism decenter anthropocentric development.
- Youth and environmental **activism**, and multifaceted protest movements in the Global North and the Global South voice their claims in the light of multiple crises.
- In the **practitioner’s field**, Feminist Development Policy frames German Development Cooperation aiming at equal opportunities and social justice for development in the Global South while confronted with shifting geopolitical patterns and reemerging authoritarianism.

With our conference, we want to zoom into these alternatives and discuss what a predominantly sociological lens can contribute to the envisioning of futures and utopias, and, ultimately, how do we envision development sociology itself in meaningful collaboration with activism and development practice?

Therefore, we invite theoretical and empirical contributions addressing the following topics and questions:

- What are **alternative epistemologies** and how can we actually decolonize development in research, teaching, activism and practice?
- How is development sociology concerned with issues of **justice**, like social justice, climate justice and intra- and intergenerational justice? How do we grasp overlapping forms of oppression and intersectional discrimination?
- How do we incorporate human-nature relationships, more-than-human and other-than-human subjectivities? How does **new materialism** influence and change our activities as researchers and activists?
- What are the **ethics and synergies of cooperation** on eye-level and how may they be approached on multiple scales, such as international and transdisciplinary research and teaching cooperation, scientist-activist collaborations?
- What is the (new?) room for maneuver under the umbrella of **Feminist Development Cooperation** and where do we sense post-colonial undercurrents in policy and practice of development cooperation?

We encourage to report on research on and with **social movements/development practice**, addressing issues of knowledge production, research methodologies and teaching ethics and resulting tensions.

Contributions from developmental sociology, anthropology and neighboring sciences are equally welcome. We request an abstract (300 words) to be sent by **April 30, 2024** to: Martina Padmanabhan (martina.padmanabhan@uni-passau.de) and Judith Ehler (judith.ehler@uni-passau.de).

Accepted submissions will be announced by mid-May 2024.

Literature:

Bhambra, Gurminder K. (2023). Rethinking Modernity. Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination. Palgrave Macmillan Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-21537-7>

Go, Julian (2016) Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory. Oxford Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190625139.001.0001>

Harcourt, Wendy, Ana Agostino, Rebecca Elmhirst, Marlene Gómez and Panagiota Kotsila eds. (2023) Contours of Feminist Political Ecology. Palgrave Macmillan Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20928-4>.

Maimunah, Siti (2022) Reclaiming "Tubuh-Tanah Air": A Life Project on Doing Feminist Political Ecology at the Capitalist Frontier. <https://opus4.kobv.de/opus4-uni-passau/frontdoor/index/index/docId/1165>