

Understanding of shared values of the COST Action “Decolonising Development: Research, Teaching and Practice” (DecolDEV)

We are commencing our collaboration at a particular nexus of crises. The ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic is only one of many. In fact, we face an acute climate crisis, environmental destruction and exploitation, the continuing rise of nationalism, far-right populism, borders, camps and walls, racism, sexism and authoritarian neoliberal politics, as well as increasing global inequalities. We realise that these multiple crises are symptoms of the much larger crisis of colonial modernity that cannot be seen in the singular but has to be considered in its entanglements. The unwavering belief in ‘development’ and its multiple subscriptions (such as a focus on endless economic growth, efficiency, productivism, consumerism a rhetoric of teleological progress, Western industrialized hyper-capitalist lifestyle based on consumerism as a yardstick, global epistemic divides between the West/Rest, anthropocentrism, and more) are core elements.

As a network of engaged scholars, activists and practitioners, we commit to taking on the challenge to reconstruct ‘development’ after its anti-Eurocentric, anti-racist and gender-sensitive deconstruction, which is aware of and countering epistemically unjust relations of power. We are convinced that there is no way to research ‘development’, global injustices and inequalities other than with a clear and vocal positioning and a firm stand against the systemic and systematic oppressions at their root.

We assert that decolonisation of knowledge about ‘development’ cannot mean to maintain a paternalist binary of those ‘developed’ and those ‘underdeveloped’ but must scrutinize the structures and institutions that maintain power imbalances and the ideas that support patriarchal and paternalistic relations and assumptions of superiority according to intersectional (read: gendered, racialized, classed etc.) objectifications of the Other.

We will actively work towards a resetting and diversification of the structures, institutions and spaces in which knowledge about and for ‘development’ is produced, shared, contested and put into practice. What is needed is not merely new knowledge, but *other* knowledges (*otros saberes*), and new ways of conceptualising knowledge(s).

We are convinced that decolonisation of ‘development’ and academia more generally is not a purely academic or theoretical activity but a site of activism with political and social relevance. Especially given that the EU is the largest global donor of development assistance, we seek to collectively and critically contest Europe’s colonial past which continues to impact on current international politics, North-South and multipolar relations, including global power shifts. We believe that decolonising 'development' also means to work ‘at home’, confront patterns of neocolonialism and imperial modes of production and consumption, failing democracy and social inequalities in COST member countries and beyond.

At the core of how we interact with each other are transparency and openness, a non-hierarchical, horizontal and cooperative manner shaped by mutual respect, solidarity and shared common knowledge(s).