

## Special Issue Call for Abstracts

### **Understanding Epistemic Erasures of Local & Indigenous Communities: Decolonizing Research and Re-imagining Alternative Partnerships**

This special issue aims to expand the boundaries of the concept of epistemic erasures in a wide range of institutional designs at the local, national, regional, European and international levels and contribute in research on alternative partnerships between actors from academia, civil society and politics in order to recognize, repair and re-imagine new decolonial futures (Stein et al. 2020). Peña-Guzmán and Reynolds (2019) argue that “epistemic erasure functions by removing entire categories or swaths of hermeneutical resources from a communicative space where they would otherwise reside because the speaker’s perceived social identity is erroneously thought to render those subjects categorically inapplicable” (p. 221). Epistemic erasure is identical to Fricker’s epistemic injustices. Fricker (2007) defines two types of epistemic injustices: testimonial and hermeneutic injustice. Testimonial injustice calls into question the lower credibility assigned to specific knowers due to the prejudice against them, such as women, minority groups, or other marginalized communities, including scholars in the periphery. These communities are regarded as second-class knowers who are seen as unfit to contribute legitimately and rationally to a knowledge consensus, policy, or decision-making and this deficit of credibility arises from gender and race-based prejudice. Hermeneutic injustice, on the other hand, means that marginalized communities are deprived of their ability to give meaning to and intelligibly communicate their experiences to dominant groups as their experiences often fall into a conceptual blank gap and cannot be explained through the concepts and approaches that are produced by the dominant groups.

Both of these injustices that arise from the Eurocentric nature of knowledge production mechanisms mean that hermeneutical resources of certain people and communities face erasure. Such erasures, on the other hand, create recognition struggles both from non-Western communities against the domination of the West and its promotion of values, institutions and governing structures but also within the West itself, from certain communities whose hermeneutical resources are facing quantitative recognition deficits or misrecognitions (Medina, 2018). Rising literature on norm contestation in Europe is an illustration that recognition struggles against epistemic erasures is becoming widespread within Europe and the West as well (Wiener, 2014; Dandashly and Noutcheva, 2022). Fricker (1998: 108) also underlines that there is likely to be ‘some social pressure on the norm of credibility to imitate the structures of social

power', and thus implies that testimonial injustice emerges when scholars in the periphery rely exclusively on the issues, concepts, theories, and methodologies that are widely believed to be valid in the center to gain credibility and recognition as knowers. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017: 51) highlights that 'every human is born into a valid and legitimate knowledge system', but eurocentric coloniality can undermine this legitimacy, causing epistemic erasures and epistemicides. Acknowledging and involving different knowledge systems require recentering knowledge in different geographies which may sometimes be embedded in local values, knowledges, and strategies of existence (Mkwananzi and Cin, 2022).

Building on the debates above, this SI aims to engage with the local and/or indigenous knowledges, values and practices of the communities living on the abyssal lines of society to forge epistemic spaces from colonial interventions, create intellectual spaces for critical thinking to document how they face and address the development challenges they face. While local communities have the ancestral knowledges and capacities to overcome challenges facing their space and society, hierarchical structures and institutions continue to enforce Western knowledge and policies to address local issues. Local knowledges are always pushed aside, benalized, exploited, appropriated, stolen, in other words: their knowledges are erased and their sovereignty over these their own epistemologies is shifted.

Epistemic erasures have been the basis for imposing Eurocentric models of living that are capitalist, colonial, racist, and patriarchal, and expressed through alleged "development" interventions. Instead, work in the margins inspired by post-development visions, has unveiled a pluriverse of knowledges that have been oppressed, but still survive as alternative ways of living, feeling, being, and relating one another, showing that different societal models exist that cannot be reduced in the one the globalized/mainstream culture has taught us. Shedding light on epistemic erasures, we aim to understand the everyday inequalities of marginalized communities both in Global North and South, and how they resist them through collective grassroots movements. It is with the guarding of epistemologies of the South and at the margins, and plurality of epistemologies, that alternative, non-hegemonic, and non-exploitative transformations alternative and non-exploitive developments become possible. Thus, we aim to give accounts of stories from the sites of struggles. We encourage reflection on how we can understand and help protect the epistemologies of the South (Santos & Meneses, 2010) and alternative ways of knowing and living without reproducing extractivism and the abyssal modes of relationship described. How to guarantee an ethical relationship with subalternized communities in our research practices? Case studies can include diverse contexts in which the community wellbeing is in question, such as

environmental protection, gender inequality, accessibility and transportation, education, poverty and social cohesion.

We invite contributions that explore ethical requirements to decolonize research in the epistemic-(post)development Nexus. Papers with empirical case studies are prioritized. Themes may include (but are not limited to):

- Critical and transformative reflections on epistemic erasures in local and indigenous communities
- Indigenous epistemologies in exile and the agencies of knowledge production during displacement
- Cosmopolitics of solidarity and resistance in indigenous territories and local communities
- Partnerships and scaling for protection of local epistemologies
- Decolonial and alternative strategies for resisting epistemic erasures and defending ancestral knowledges
- Critical methodological and decolonial approaches for research on local and indigenous epistemologies

The proposed abstracts must demonstrate decolonial theory and methodology, with a research question of clear transformative value. The deadline for the submission of a 500 word abstract, 5-6 keywords, and a short author bio (100-150 words) is September 22nd, 2022. Abstracts to be sent to [yafa.elmasri@phd.unipd.it](mailto:yafa.elmasri@phd.unipd.it). Further information about manuscript length, images, editorial guidelines and additional practical information will be communicated in a later stage.

**Publication timeline:**

Abstracts are due by: September 22nd, 2022

Notifications of acceptance: September 27th

In-Person meeting of authors and editors in Padova, Italy: November\December 2022

Submission of primary draft (3,000 words): May 2023

In-Person writing retreat in Spain: May 2023

Full manuscript due: June, 2023

Peer review: TBD

Final publication: 2024

Please address all enquiries to [yafa.elmasri@phd.unipd.it](mailto:yafa.elmasri@phd.unipd.it)

### The special issue editorial board:

Yafa El Masri

Kitty Furtado

Paola Minoia

Rahime Süleymanoğlu-Kürüm

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