

Gender & Development

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: Volume 31, Issue 2&3: Decolonising Knowledge and Practice

Gender & Development (G&D) is a unique journal, offering a forum for the sharing of experiences and analysis between feminist activists, scholars and women leaders across the globe working in research, policy and practice. The double issue of G&D of 2023 will be published in November 2023, and will focus on decolonising knowledge structures and processes across a range of domains.

The Context

The history of knowledge production and dissemination cannot be understood outside of the history of colonialism, patriarchy and capitalism that in turn underpin current neoliberal frameworks and institutions. Knowledge production is a process that entails power and is historically full of examples of colonial extraction and appropriation of knowledge systems from indigenous communities¹. Furthermore, in the current global political context, which is marked by increasing right-wing extremism, the discourse of decolonising knowledge and practice is being steadily co-opted and instrumentalised to serve majoritarian agendas. All these factors have made addressing the theme of decolonisation even more urgent.

Much scholarly attention has been devoted to decolonising knowledge. Post-colonial scholarship, critical race studies, Dalit studies and Queer studies have provided strong critiques of colonial, racist and patriarchal frameworks that regard knowledge as singular, homogeneous and teleological, rather than situated, partial, dialogical, inclusive, embodied and multiple, and have been working consistently to centre marginalised epistemologies to challenge hegemonic hold over knowledge. Along with these, powerful activism and movement building efforts globally, continue to challenge top down impositions of development, while collectively pushing for transformative and community led social change.

Despite these efforts, race, class, gender and caste based inequities and exclusions persist across domains of knowledge, both online and offline such as in academic publishing, universities, online knowledge platforms, curricula, research processes, galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAMs), grassroots knowledge and community practices.

Academic publishing

The difficulty in accessing high quality peer reviewed academic journals by scholars of colour and southern institutions is widely acknowledged. High subscription rates prevent many libraries and civil society organisations from accessing academic journals they see of value. Publishing in these journals is also challenging due to various structural inequalities, including particular publishing standards, language barriers, exorbitant rates to publish in open access and the often unaccountable editorial processes that are embedded in the system, resulting in a decline in the rate of acceptance of submissions by scholars of colour (Else and Perkel 2022). This lack of sufficient representation of scholars of colour is carried forward through citation politics where the academic work of cis-het

¹ Both extraction/appropriation and neglect/denial of knowledges and practices, for example prohibiting home births and midwifery to then rediscovering it and appropriating it.

white scholars (mostly men) is overwhelmingly reproduced and cited, resulting in further peripheralisation of Dalit, BIPOC, LGBTQ and disability scholarship.

The urgent need to decolonise ‘technological and institutional infrastructures of scholarship’ (Okune 2019) has thus been globally recognised. A series of global initiatives in the form of the open access movement and journals have emerged to tackle these inequities. Nonetheless, the pressure to publish in high impact journals owned by a handful of top publishers remains high, and academic knowledge produced, managed and owned by northern corporate publishers continues to be assigned high value (Larivière, Haustein and Mongeon 2015, 1).

Universities and curricula

Most modern universities both in the global ‘North’ and ‘South’ have been historically founded on colonial intellectual legacy and are characterised by institutionalised race and caste-based discrimination. In the last decade, students, faculty and administration in higher learning are questioning and challenging the highly gated nature of universities and pushing for decolonisation and transformation of campuses and curricula (Gopal 2021; [France Nkokomane Ntloedibe](#) 2019).

The lack of diversity is further reflected in university curricula and the deprioritising of needs of marginalised scholars and disciplines. Although critical disciplines such as Disability Studies, Crip Studies, Queer Studies and Dalit Studies have been asserting and occupying spaces within mainstream university academia, they simultaneously hold a peripheral and precarious status, manifested in struggles for funding. These centres are critical spaces where theories around marginalisation and emancipatory politics occur, where heteronormative, colonial, racist and ableist norms are challenged, and where theory, politics and activism come together. Research shows that when universities of specific programmes face funding constraints, it hits students belonging to marginalised groups the hardest.

Digital knowledge platforms

Digital knowledge platforms in an overwhelmingly Northern and white Internet also end up reproducing hierarchies. However, online global campaigns are steadily bringing forth knowledge(s) about marginalised communities to address these knowledge gaps. They are bringing visibility to the history of marginalised communities through editing and (re)writing in existing knowledge sharing platforms. Several Collective digital initiatives are pushing for decolonising digital technologies and infrastructures to make these more inclusive, accountable and accessible.

Decolonising Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAMS)

Multiple artists all over the world are challenging the colonial and racist dynamics inherent in GLAMS and pushing to “decolonize” GLAMs and heritage management practices, both online and offline. They are doing so by bringing changes in policies to revisit issues of ownership, control and cultural memory, and they bring attention to ‘whose knowledge’ shapes culture and heritage and whose knowledges and cultural representations are undermined in this process (Wallace 2021, Janes and Sandell 2019).

Development discourse and practice

Colonial power dynamics are embedded in development discourse and practice planned, executed and funded by multilateral development bodies and international donor organisations. Feminist and post-colonial scholars and activists all over the world have offered strident critiques of the international development agenda that itself produces, diagnoses and offers top down solutions to tackle problems of social and economic inequality in the ‘developing world’ through a prescribed set of neoliberal and individualised ‘empowering’ solutions, while largely ignoring structures of colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy, as well as expertise, experiences and practices at the grassroots level.

Key objectives and themes of the Issue:

This issue of *Gender & Development* will examine the colonial and patriarchal power dynamics that undergird our knowledge and research institutions, publishing realm, development policy and practice and our everyday lives. We invite research articles, shorter practice-based essays as well as critical and innovative methodologies in the ‘global South’ and ‘North’ which could include photo-essays, illustrations, short audio and video submissions, as well as poetry and stories that offer a feminist decolonial/post-colonial analysis of these institutions and practices and propose creative solutions or ways ahead to tackle institutionalised colonialism, casteism, racism and patriarchy in knowledge production, dissemination and practice. To this end, we put together the following objectives and themes:

Objectives:

1. To examine the ways in which power, oppression and exclusion operate across knowledge domains and the multiple resistances that have emerged to challenge and reappropriate exclusionary knowledge systems and processes.
2. To develop a feminist decolonial critical thinking of international development models and offer new ways to strengthen local and social movements aimed towards gender transformative change.

Few key themes that the issue will explore are:

- What does the term ‘decolonising’ mean, and how is it being operationalised by different groups and institutions, especially in a political context characterised by rising right-wing political fundamentalism, neo-colonialism and social polarisation?
- What kinds of colonial, patriarchal, caste and racial hierarchies and discriminations exist, and how do they operate in knowledge domains such as academic publishing, universities and curricula, galleries, libraries, archives and museums, digital knowledge platforms, gender justice movements research processes and development practice?
- How are these hierarchies, inequities and resistances challenged and resisted through collective efforts both online and offline, and how do they shape knowledge and practice?
- How are organisations and collectives challenging and reimagining development policy and practice as well as funding?
- What are some successful cases and practices on decolonizing knowledge as a tangible inspiration of showing that it is possible?
- What collaborations and alliances could we plan with civil societies, collectives and groups in order to decolonise knowledge and practice?
- What are the challenges and struggles faced so far in these processes? How do we prevent/mitigate/challenge tokenism?
- How is decolonising academic structures intertwined with decolonising development, programme, policy and practice? In other words, how can we bring theory and practice, and academia and activism, closer together?

Submissions

Please send your abstract of 250 words with details about your research and preliminary findings or a small multi-modal proposal (a two minute video clip abstract or 250 word abstract with images) in an email attachment to genderanddevelopment.south@gmail.com with the subject line ‘**Abstract/Proposal submission for July/November 2023 issue**’ by the **15th of January, 2023**. Please include your name, contact details as well as organisational affiliation, if relevant. We will contact you by the end of January, 2023, if we would like you to develop your abstract into a full article/essay/photo essay/video/illustrations.

Guidelines for content:

- Full research article should be no more than 7,000 words including references and excluding abstract and annexures. The annexures can include photographs, maps, images, graphs, etc. Multi-media content can be embedded within the article and should be kept below 500MB file size. Guidelines for contributors can be found [here](#).
- Shorter essays should be 4000 words, and these can include photographs, maps, images, graphs. Multi-media content should be kept below 500MB file size.
- Photo essay and illustrations can be uploaded on Flickr or any other image sharing platforms and then shared with the editorial team.
- Video submission: video plus text commentary (3,000-5,000 words) and videos should be a maximum of 10 minutes long. Video frame size must be a minimum of 640 × 360 pixels and a 16:9 aspect ratio is recommended. We recommend that authors create high quality versions of their videos and make a compressed copy of them for submission and upload these in Vimeo (<http://vimeo.com>) and password protect them.
- All content must be original and authors are responsible for obtaining necessary consent and permission for the use of any third party material.

For more information on the journal, visit: www.genderanddevelopment.org

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