

25.11. 2022

2-4PM CET
6.30-8.30 IST



WORKING GROUP SESSION ON “DECOLONIAL THINKING IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE”

This working group session is part of a series of activities of the HU/ZMO-coordinated [Co²libri network initiative](#), funded by [BUA and the Berlin Centre for Global Engagement](#). It is coordinated by the Co²libri Networking Initiative, the Working Group *Theories and Thinkers from the South* at ZMO/FU Berlin and with the Research Ethics Initiative at IAAW.

This fishbowl talk will be audio-recorded on zoom and made available as podcast via our Co²libri website. Participants can comment and ask questions anonymously via the zoom chat to one of the moderators to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

PROGRAM

14.00-14.15 ROUND OF WELCOME

- Welcome by Andrea Fleschenberg, IAAW/HU Berlin, on behalf of Co2libri, and by Prathama Banerjee, CSDS Delhi, as moderator
- Input by Suren Pillay, University of the Western Cape Capetown: “The Problem of Colonialism: Assimilation, Difference, and Decolonial Theory”
- Discussants’ Inputs by Baidik Bhattacharya, CSDS Delhi, and Kai Kresse, ZMO/FU Berlin, followed by plenary discussion

DIGITAL COORDINATES

Zoom link:

<https://hu-berlin.zoom.us/j/65585547872?pwd=S1FFeWg5Mzc3MWhqZnIzSk1yeVA2Zz09>

Meeting-ID: 655 8554 7872

Password: 018531

This session is dedicated to a discussion of diverse strands of decolonial thinking as they exist in the world today, sometimes in conversation with each other and sometimes not. At the heart of the discussion is Suren Pillay’s essay,¹ which maps the transformations that Latin American ‘decolonial theory’ goes through in its travels across the US academy and more centrally, South African Universities. The essay argues that we must understand the diverse histories and structures of colonialism(s) as they evolved in interaction with diverse lands and peoples across the world, a heterogeneity that gets erased if we uncritically replace the concept of ‘colonialism’ with an abstract and universal conception of ‘coloniality’. Instead of imagining decolonial thinking as one, singular project, this session explores the different forms that decolonial thinking has assumed in different historical, regional, and linguistic contexts, borne out of different colonialisms and different postcolonial trajectories. The respondents bring to the table thoughts from other contexts as well, including South Asia and West Africa. Hence the call to bring a new kind of comparative perspective to bear on contemporary decolonial thinking.

¹ CRITICAL TIMES 4 (3): 389–416. [HTTPS://DOI.ORG/10.1215/26410478-9355201](https://doi.org/10.1215/26410478-9355201)

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BIOGRAPHIC NOTES OF SPEAKERS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

Prathama Banerjee is a historian at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi, India. She works at the cusp of political theory, intellectual and cultural history and philosophies of time. Her books include *Politics of Time: 'primitives' and history-writing in a colonial society* (2006) and *Elementary Aspects of the Political: histories from the global south* (2020).

Suren Pillay is Associate Professor at the Centre for Humanities Research at the University of the Western Cape in Cape Town, South Africa. His current research focuses on the intellectual and political legacies of colonialism in the present. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from Columbia University in New York. A previous editor of the journal *Social Dynamics*, he currently serves on the editorial collective of the journal *Transformation*, and the journal *Postcolonial Studies*. He is editor of the forthcoming volume, *On the Subject of Citizenship, Late Colonialism in the World Today*, Bloomsbury: London.

Baidik Bhattacharya is Associate Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. He is the author of *The Literary Sovereign: How Colonialism Shaped the Modern Culture of Letters* (forthcoming 2023) and *Postcolonial Writing in the Era of World Literature: Texts, Territories, Globalizations* (2018).

Kai Kresse is Vice-Director at the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) and Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Freie Universität Berlin. He works on the interface between anthropology, philosophy, and African studies. He has conducted research on thinkers, internal debates, and intellectual practice on the Swahili coast; and he has contributed to debates in the field of African philosophy, e.g. with the forthcoming co-edited volume *Re-thinking Sage Philosophy: interdisciplinary perspectives on and beyond H. Odera Oruka* (Lexington). His books include *Philosophising in Mombasa* (2007) and *Swahili Muslim Publics and Postcolonial Experience* (2018).