

Practices of Storytelling and Indigenous Epistemologies

May 3rd, 2024

Leibniz University Hannover
Welfengarten 1A, Building 1105, Großer Seminarraum 001 (ground floor)
30167 Hannover

Schedule

09:00 – 09:25	Registration and coffee
09:25 – 09:30	Welcome
09:30 – 10:30	Yolanda Lopez-Maldonado (Indigenous Science) <i>Indigenous knowledge "as it is": The Good and Bad of Combining Knowledge Systems</i>
10:35 – 11:35	Inkeri Koskinen (University of Helsinki) <i>Oral History as Legal Evidence and Conflicting Demands for Objectivity</i>
11:35 – 11:55	Coffee Break
12:00 – 13:00	David Ludwig (Wageningen University) <i>Science as Humanitarian Knowledge and as an Agent of Violence: Telling Stories About International Development</i>
13:00 – 14:25	Lunch (catered) at room C109 , building 1101 (university main building), Welfengarten 1, 30167 Hannover
14:30 – 15:30	Adriana Moreno Cely (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) <i>Singing the Unspeakable: The Transformative Power of Storytelling Otherwise in Weaving a New Tapestry of Knowledge and (Re)Constructing Collective Consciousness</i>
15:35 – 16:35	Krushil Watene (University of Auckland) <i>Pūrākau as Philosophy and Some Implications</i>
16:35 – 16:55	Coffee Break
17:00 – 18:00	Panel Discussion
19:30	Dinner (self-paid) at bona'me Hannover, Am Hohen Ufer 5 A&B, 30159 Hannover

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Abstracts

Yolanda López-Maldonado

Indigenous knowledge "as it is": The Good and Bad of Combining Knowledge Systems

Indigenous Peoples (IP) have a unique perspective and accurate knowledge (IK) on the mechanisms and dynamics in various Earth systems that have evolved over generations through direct contact with the environment. Scientific and policy spheres suggest the need to gather such information and combine it with Western science approaches to fill information gaps (e.g. by combining the knowledge produced or held by academics and non-academics with the knowledge of IP). The combination of different knowledge systems to solve environmental problems is rooted in an apparent "inclusive" participation. However, in the name of such participation, IP are involved in those spheres often to learn and process concepts, approaches, ways of thinking and engaging with Western ways. But this may not lead to building new knowledge to its full potential because the various instruments and tools for co-production come from Western methodologies and approaches, posing the risk of being de-indigenised or rationalised to scientific disciplines and, as a consequence, IK can change, be forgotten, reinterpreted and continue being dominated by Western knowledge systems. Consequently, IK continues to be overlooked, as its independence and validity is not fully accepted. From an indigenous point of view, emphasising such processes instead of recovering IP methods and approaches severely affects indigenous ways of thinking. I argue that the current process of combining knowledge systems needs to be evaluated and conceptualised differently as, from an indigenous perspective, it is not a sufficient condition for full recognition of IK and, rather, is a way of bureaucratically incorporating IK into the scientific and policy-making spheres. More erosion of IK –even small– would markedly influence humanity's future. Thus, there is a need to initiate a process of recovery, restoration and revitalisation of IK, and this process must be initiated, led and carried out by IP.

Inkeri Koskinen

Oral History as Legal Evidence and Conflicting Demands for Objectivity

In some countries, oral narratives can be used as evidence in courts. However, their evidential value is often contested, as they are easily dismissed as hearsay. In this paper I analyse two conflicting demands for objectivity in such situations. On the one hand, the demand to accept oral history as legal evidence is based on the idea that to be objective, one must avoid bias: courts must take into account all relevant evidence, not just the evidence favouring one side, and in oral legal systems the relevant evidence is oral. On the other hand, the demand to dismiss hearsay as legal evidence is also based on the idea that bias must be avoided: hearsay is taken to be easily biased. I will analyse these conflicting demands for objectivity in the light of an agentive account of objectivity that draws attention to the relatively short history of the contemporary notion of objectivity.

David Ludwig

Science as Humanitarian Knowledge and as an Agent of Violence: Telling Stories About International Development

Research for Development (R4D) is a major intersection between the development industry and academic research in domains such as agriculture, conservation, engineering, and public health. R4D is commonly legitimized through humanitarian narratives about scientists spreading their knowledge to "the most marginalized" and thereby improving livelihoods in the Global South. However, stories about the humanitarian achievements of science have become challenged by counter-narratives that frame R4D as an agent of violent modernization and destruction of biocultural diversity. The contestation of R4D has led to the emergence of new stories about Indigenous, endogenous, and transdisciplinary alternatives to mainstream development. Drawing from fieldwork in Brazil, Colombia, Ghana, and Mexico, this talk introduces conflicting narratives and reflects on the power of stories in structuring knowledge production in international development.

Adriana Moreno Cely

Singing the Unspeakable: The Transformative Power of Storytelling Otherwise in Weaving a New Tapestry of Knowledge and (Re)Constructing Collective Consciousness

Although decolonizing research has opened new horizons towards a more pluriversal world, knowledge production remains the right of a privileged minority. This contribution seeks to exalt the possibilities that offer storytelling otherwise to de-centring and de-privileging knowledge generation. To this end, this presentation describes three different lived experiences of Afro-descendant women affected by the armed conflict in Colombia. Despite the fear, women refused to be silent and dared to sing and weave coloured threads, poems and songs to (re)signify and (re)construct collective memory to confront the different forms of violence that affect them. These stories illustrate how art and art-making are the vehicle to tell stories otherwise and serve as tools for (i) generating collective situated knowledge, (ii) developing critical awareness to foster social change through collective resistance, (iii) (re)valuing other ways of knowing, acting and being, as well as (iv) (re)inventing research practices born from the struggles in the territories.

Krushil Watene

Pūrākau as Philosophy and Some Implications

This paper explores the role of pūrākau (stories and storytelling) for Māori Philosophy. The paper contends that pūrākau are repositories of accumulated knowledge that not only contain Māori Philosophy but enable its critical engagement and cultivation. Practices of storytelling are, then, vital to the creation and transformation of Māori concepts and ideas, and vital to understanding Māori practices of philosophical inquiry. In laying this out, the paper details some of the ways that Māori and other Indigenous methods reimagine philosophy – not least in ways they include the needs and aspirations of the communities in which these philosophies are experienced and lived.