Decolonizing Development

Panel | 9 May 2022 | 18:00–20:00 (CEST / SAT) | online via Zoom

Talking about development is still considered by many to be an expression of thinking that indicates the global dominance of the Western model of society. Development thinking is suspected, not without good reason, of following a modernisation-theory understanding of social evolution that continues to focus on rationalisation and economic growth despite the consideration of sustainability.

Recently, however, serious changes have occurred in global development discourse. In this context, new attention is given to the social role of religion plays a crucial role. The secularisation narrative and with it the assumption of an increasing loss of public significance of religion arelosing their explanatory power for the present. Alternatives to modernization theory models of social evolution are coming into view and consequently a post-development discourse is gaining ground. It proposes alternative objectives of social evolution, especially from the global South. Voices from the global South are, therefore, increasingly taking a leading role in the discourse on values and norms, goals and criteria of a societal transformation oriented towards sustainability, social justice, equality and democratic participation.

The IRTG "Transformative Religion" researches the transformative power of religion also in terms of development discourse. This prominent panel on "Decolonizing Development" promises further inspiration on how to rethink development. What could a practice of development look like that is not oriented towards predefined development goals, such as the UN Agenda 2030, but rather makes situational knowledge fruitful in local contexts? Can religious communities unfold a transformative power due to their situated knowledge of people's needs and abilities?

Panelists

Ezra˚ Chitando is a Professor, History and Phenomenology of Religion at the University of Zimbabwe and Theology Consultant for the World Council of Churches. His research and publication interests include religion and: development, security, gender, sexuality, climate change and others. DPhil (UZ 2001); MA (UZ 1993); BA HONS (UZ 1991). Research fellowships: Humboldt Georg Forster Research Award, Bamberg, Germany, 2016; Humboldt Research Fellowship, Bayreuth, Germany, 2004-5; Nordic Africa Institute Guest Researcher, Uppsala, Sweden, 2001; DAAD Scholarship, Bayreuth, Germany, 2001; Short-Term Fulbright Fellowship, New York, 1999; African Guest Researcher, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1997. Doctoral supervision in the following areas: Religion and Gender, HIV, Politics, Leadership, Development, Sexualities, Human Rights, Environment, Biblical Interpretation.

Katherine Marshall is a senior fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, where she leads the center's work on religion and global development, and a professor of the practice of development, conflict, and religion in the Walsh School of Foreign Service. She helped to create and now serves as the executive director of the World Faiths Development Dialogue. She is also vice president of the G20 Interfaith Association. Marshall, who worked at the World Bank from 1971 to 2006, has nearly five decades of experience on a wide range of development issues in Africa, Latin America, East Asia, and the Middle East, particularly those facing the world's poorest countries. She led the World Bank's faith and ethics initiative between 2000 and 2006.

Aram Ziai is head of the department Development Policy and Postcolonial Studies, which was established as Heisenberg-Professorship of the German Research Foundation (DFG) in 2014. His focus lies in the fields of development theory and policy, postcolonial and Post-Development approaches and global economic governance. He has studied in Aachen and Dublin (MA in sociology, minors history and English literature), got his PhD in political science in Hamburg and his habilitation in political science in Kassel. Afterwards he had research and teaching posts in the universities of Aachen, Magdeburg, Kassel, Amsterdam (UvA), Wien (IE), Bonn (ZEF), Accra (Legon), and Teheran (UT).