

# Introducing *Decolonial Subversions* – a new Multilingual Open Access Publishing Platform

The image shows the front cover of the book "Decolonial Subversions". The title is written in a large, white, serif font against a dark red, textured background that resembles a book cover or endpaper.

Co-created by: Dr Romina Istratii and Monika Hirmer

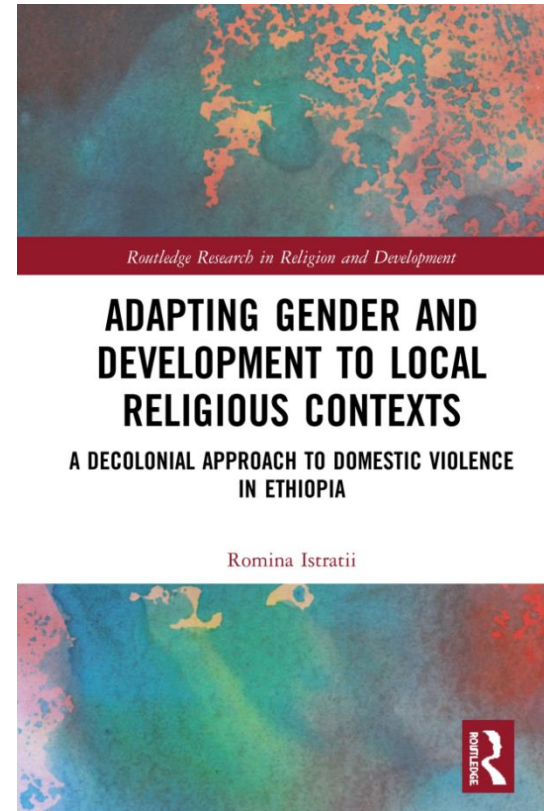
(Presented by: Dr Romina Istratii)

# My background

Critical international development researcher and practitioner with decade-long experience in sub-Saharan Africa working to:

- Address the disconnect between gender & development theory and communities' lived experiences
- Emphasise the importance of linguistic and cosmological translation in understanding local experiences and issues

To improve the effectiveness of gender-sensitive interventions in religious societies



# My journey in decolonising knowledge-making and publishing 2016-2020

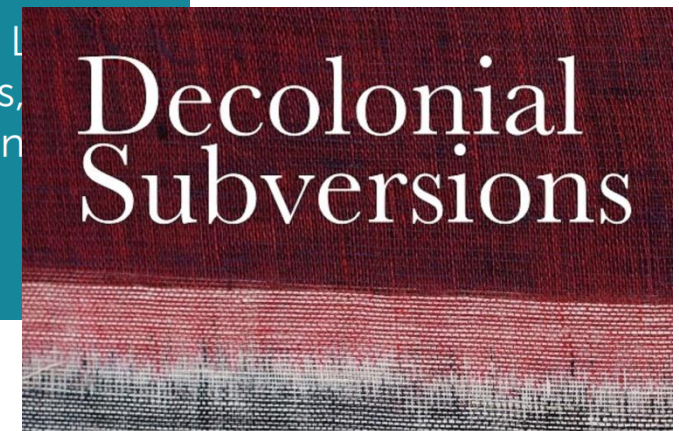


1st Joint PhD Symposium of the SOAS Research Students' Association  
(RSA) & The SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research (SJPR)

## Decolonisation in Praxis

Thursday 07 June 2018, 10am-2pm  
SOAS, Wolfson Lecture Theatre (SWLT)  
Senate House

Decolonising the academic curriculum of universities. The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), established as a colonial project in 1916, has been increasingly requesting a re-evaluation of its centre and portrayed a certain (western) normative. All this converges to an epistemologies, normative standards and specialising in African and Oriental



# **The dominance of western Eurocentrism in knowledge production and the system that maintains it**



# Key epistemological issues in knowledge production

- Disconnect between theory and practice and between researcher/academic and communities/the wider public
- Dominance of English language in both teaching and published research – favours Anglophone standards of knowledge production
- Euro-centric standards of knowledge validation, research excellence and impact: politics of citation, peer review norms and modes/forms of knowledge sharing

# Structural, normative and regulatory framework

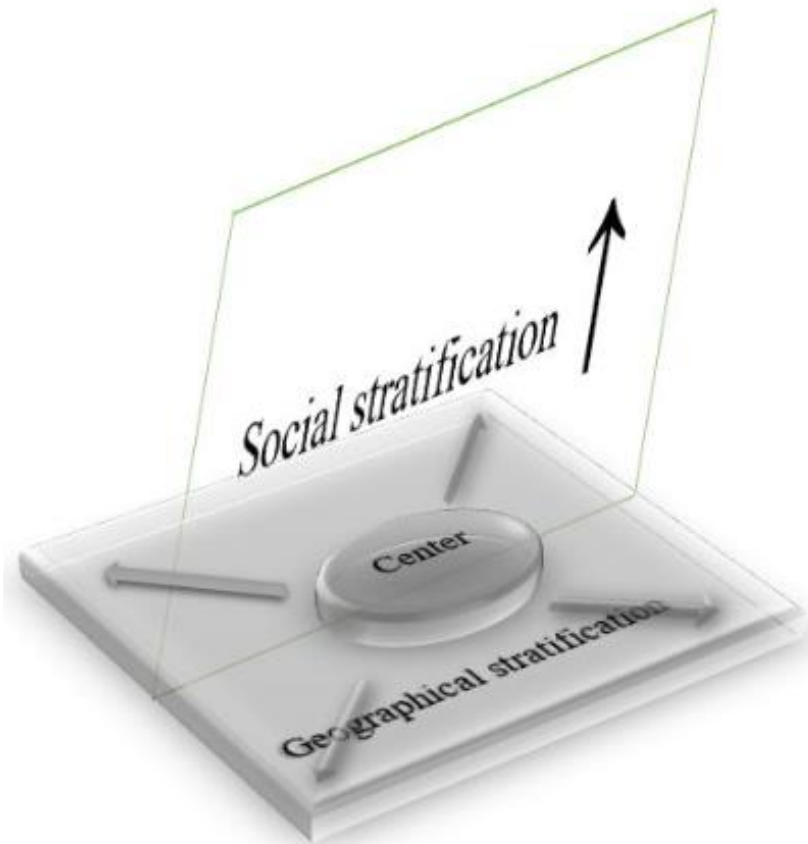
- Political and ideological agendas, financial constraints and regulatory framework in UK HE (e.g. Industrial Strategy, Higher Education Research Act 2017 – Haldane principle, Research Excellence Framework, etc.)
- Research funding climate, funding priorities and rules and data management laws
- Geographical distribution of publishing houses and established publication norms (e.g. peer review, metrics, etc.)

# 3-dimensional model of academic stratification

Core-periphery structure of global academic capital

More than 75 percent of social science articles ever published in periodicals indexed in the Web of Science's SSCI list by North American or Western European authors. Less than 10 percent by authors in Africa, Latin-America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

Geographical location/language of publishing houses, peer review standards and scientometrics important contributing factors



Source: Demeter (2019)

# ***Decolonial Subversions: An Activist initiative to praxistically change the discourse***



# About *Decolonial Subversions*

- an open access and multilingual platform committed to decentring western epistemology in the humanities and social sciences.
- the organic development of the Editors' previous editorial work at *The SOAS Journal of Postgraduate Research* (ISSN 2517-6226) but especially the 2018 volume and homonymous conference 'Decolonisation in Praxis.'
- radically subversive initiative that tries to minimise the reproduction of publishing practices that perpetuate inequalities in the global production and distribution of knowledge.
- conceived as a platform for the expression of historically silenced knowledge systems at the margins in multiple forms and media.
- aspired to serve as a bridge between scholarship/knowledge-making and practical societal issues publishing work by both academics and practitioners.

- to facilitate publication for lower-income contributors located in either industrialised or lower-income countries
- to stress that knowledge should be free and freely shared for wider use and critique in contrast to the currently widespread, euphemistically only open access publishing model used by established publishing houses.
- to break the current cycle of self-affirming western epistemic hegemony by promoting the citation of non-western, female and other marginalised sources in lieu of antiquated Anglo-American (predominantly male) voices.
- to promote knowledge-making that is centred on lived experiences and that is transparent about the positionality from which the researcher/author researches, speaks and writes.
- to redress hidden biases in peer review processes.

# Principles/approach

- We acknowledge that even historically marginalised voices do not eschew power hierarchies and do not necessarily represent the full gamut of diverse (and often contradictory) perspectives.
- We do not consider anyone representative of any group or culture but wish to promote knowledge-making that is centred on lived experiences and that is transparent about the epistemological location from which the author/speaker/writer researches, speaks and writes.
- We encourage authors to consider and discuss how their own identities, worldviews and roles in the research process influence or inform their methodological and theoretical choices.

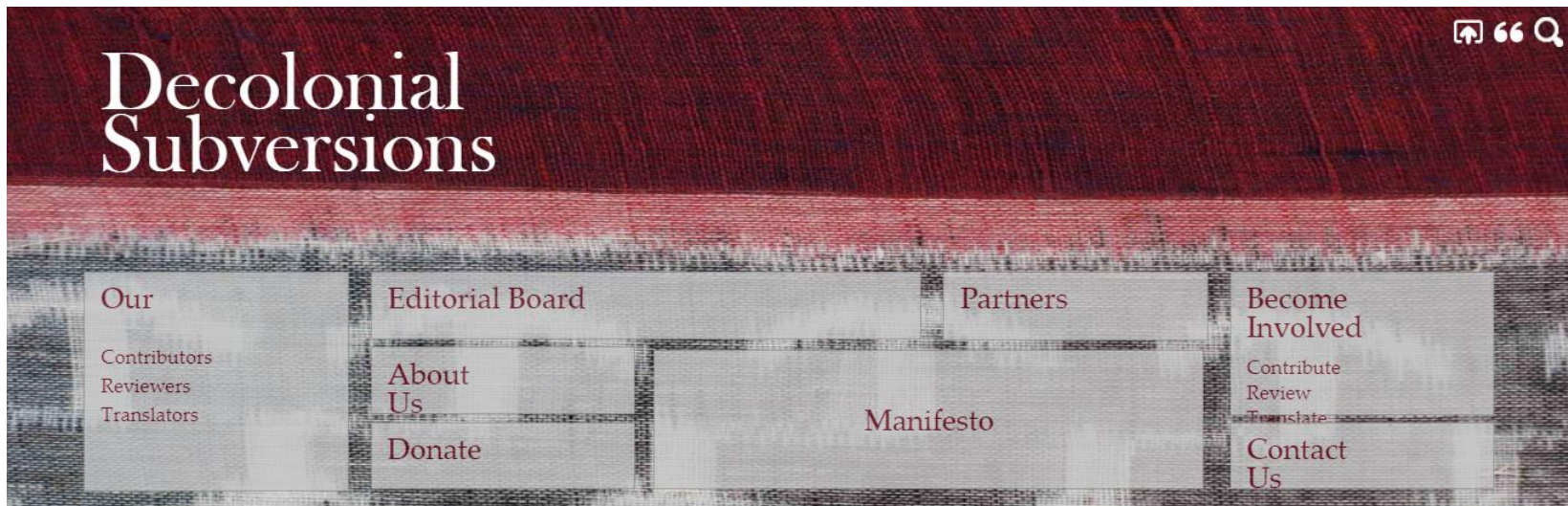
- We encourage contributors to submit their contributions in local languages (in relation to context), where an English version can also be provided, or to translate contributions in English to local languages as pertinent to the communities of research or contributed content.
- More specifically, the journal encourages: a) Contributions in a local language accompanied by an English translation, b) Contributions in English accompanied by a translation in a local language pertinent to the research, c) English contributions provided that they incorporate substantial content (up to 50%) in a local language (such as songs, linguistic analyses, etc.).
- By encouraging submission in both the languages that are most relevant to research communities and in English, the journal aims to facilitate a substantive dialogue between researchers cross-culturally and to increase the likelihood that non-western knowledge systems and perspectives can influence and subvert the dominant Anglophone knowledge production system.



- Contributors are encouraged to work with indigenous research partners or translators acquainted with the cosmological and linguistic frameworks they work in to produce translations.
- Established academics are encouraged to collaborate with early-career researchers or students who can serve as translators, facilitating their training and providing them with opportunities for publication. The aim is to subvert current hierarchies, firstly between established academics and emerging researchers and secondly, between researchers from industrialised societies and researchers, research assistants, translators or other research personnel in LMICs.
- The journal is adamant that translators be fully acknowledged for their work and duly identified. Where authors are proficient in both languages, they are invited to provide their own translations providing proper context and justification.

- The journal has pioneered a new open review process that encourages transparency and a higher degree of dialogue between reviewer and author.
- While this is not ideal, it allows authors to be transparent about the ‘I’ in the research presentation, under the understanding that anonymity can mask and contribute to the continuation of discriminatory power dynamics.
- It can also foster exchange of ideas and understandings informed by different positionalities between reviewers and authors, as a prelude to wider exchange with the platform’s international readership.
- Where the authors opt for anonymity, reviewers remain anonymous, but we carefully select reviewers with diverse characteristics and backgrounds (at least one must be from the country most relevant to the content of the contribution) to counteract mono-directional bias.

- *Decolonial Subversions* is comprised of an international team of collaborators and like-minded researchers, practitioners and professionals from 12 countries: India, Ethiopia, Senegal, Namibia, South Africa, Hong Kong, Hungary, Greece, Moldova, Italy, Germany and the UK. All these specialists appear on the website of the platform as integral members and stakeholders of this initiative.





# Structure

## **Day-to-day operations**

Founding editors, Monika Hirmer and Romina Istratii

Technical partners, Nirbhay Sen, Mukesh Manda, Gauri Nori, Rachel Duncan

## **Strategic support team**

Advisory board: Shubhashree Basnyat, Suyash Barve, Márton Demeter, Mike Thomas

Editorial Board: Sharmila Chauhan, Vimala Devi K, Alex Kanyimba, Tung-Yi Kho, Ioannis Kyriakakis, Ousmane Pame, Prasanna Sree Satupathi, Alena Rettová

## **Specialised support team**

Language partners: Elisée Byelongo, Elias Gebrselasse, Gustav Mbeha

Reviewers and Translators (specific to each volume)

## **Wider network**

Institutional partners



# Aspired modus operandi

- Collaborative – consultative
- Mutually fulfilling and beneficial
- Rotational editorialship
- Bridging academia, activism and practice
- Decentred
- Reflexive attitude
- Continuously revisiting and, where necessary, amending, the concept of ‘decolonisation’
- Bottom-up approach
- New metrics foregoing established publication hierarchies: free accessibility worldwide in an ever increasing number of language, styles (academic and non), and modes of expression (visual, acoustic, written)



# The use of digital technologies

- We use a number of digital technologies to disseminate the contributions published through the platform. Each platform serves slightly different purposes and targets different stakeholders/audience groups. They all aim to bridge knowledge-production with different publics and societal issues.
  - Main website: <http://decolonialsubversions.org/>
  - Academia.edu:  
<https://independent.academia.edu/DecolonialSubversions>
  - Twitter: [https://twitter.com/\\_decolonise](https://twitter.com/_decolonise)
  - YouTube:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9d4hOqqoGo5kN\\_oh0wvzUA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9d4hOqqoGo5kN_oh0wvzUA)