



22 November 2022: 11h30 – 13h30

UNU-CRIS, Potterierei – 72 room CO3 Groot Seminarie

UNU-CRIS/CESSMIR Seminar

Decentering research on governance and international cooperation

Guided by broadly shared critiques of Western- and Euro-centrism within social sciences, and by insights from post-colonial and critical studies, researchers on international cooperation and governance within a variety of policy fields (e.g., migration and border control, development cooperation and environmental governance) have called for putting ‘the South’ centre stage when advancing understandings of global-local power dynamics, their outcomes and different ways of resistance. Such approaches that ‘decentre’ the gaze from the Western/Northern actorness in the way policies are transmitted across the globe, led to a proliferation of empirical ‘bottom-up’ accounts of governance projects and a focus on bringing Southern spaces, non-state actors and alternative scripts of governance to the spotlight. However, the project of decentering and recentering the ‘South’ has been criticized as well, as this tendency could equally result in further exclusion. Central attention is needed for the way the South and the North mutually constitute instead as well as for a historization of Southern contexts and colonial continuities. There is a need for pluralising the ontological, epistemological and methodological tools to realign the South and the North as loci of co-construction and co-presence. This realignment cannot occur without a reconsideration of the normative role of researchers, academic knowledge and jargon in effecting social and political changes in both Northern and Southern spaces.

This panel aims to contribute to these debates by reflecting on *empirical, theoretical, methodological or moral questions of decentering* from different disciplinary perspectives and geographical contexts.

Prof. Nora El Qadim (Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Paris 8-Vincennes Saint-Denis) researches international relations in the field of migration. Her work on EU-Morocco relations and her attempts at decentring have led her to question the concept of externalization and to interrogate asymmetrical international relations. She will reflect on how the benefits and pitfalls of the concept of agency, as well as on the tension between strategic and culturalist approaches to decentring.

Rossella Marino (PhD researcher UNU-CRIS/UGent) works on the topics of assisted return and reintegration as well as externalization of migration management, for which she conducted extensive ethnographic research in The Gambia. She will pit Western-imposed concepts such as sustainable reintegration against the lived realities of returnees as they try to carve out their place in the landscape of externalization, where they are highly valued as carriers of migration-avert discourses among their communities. Stemming from this, she will reflect on her own role at the intersection of research and expertise on migration management, manifesting in the instances whereby she talked about mobility injustice with returnees and potential migrants, while enjoying the privilege of unfettered mobility herself.



Prof. Jan Orbie (Associate Professor at the Department of Political Science at Ghent University) works on the foreign policies of the European Union. His intervention will elaborate on his own experiences (and failures) in trying to overcome eurocentricism in research on the EU's external trade and development policies. In doing so, he will reflect on the decentring approach and how this should be reconsidered and criticized from a postcolonial perspective.

Mary Ann Manahan (PhD researcher UGent, Department of Conflict and Development Studies) works on the intersections of indigenous peoples' struggles for autonomy, conservation and development. Her talk will focus on the global-local policy translation of international conservation policies and projects and how indigenous peoples and other local actors navigate them. She reflects on what decentring research can mean in this very political, state-dominated processes.

Discussant: **Prof. dr. Jean Pierre Cassarino** (Senior Research Fellow, College of Europe)

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