

Editorial: Call for papers – indigenous epistemologies and circular economy: critical reflections from the periphery

The idea of a Circular Economy (CE) is currently one of the most popular ideas within our modern economic discourse and *lingua franca* but this idea, like many other popular ideas, is not without its own controversies. Controversies and uncertainties have arisen not only with regard to the meaning of CE but also around the question of who defines it and from which position. A quick look at the literature on the articulations of the meanings of CE and what it seeks to achieve reveals the common inclination toward a “provincial” Western worldview by few white male knowledge producers overlain with some universalistic undertones. This leaves us with the question that is currently troubling the whole modern social scientific theory at the present moment; the question of where is the voice of the “rest” of the population particularly the non-Western subject, the black subject, the female subject, the indigenous subject and many other categories of people whose voices have been muted by the modern/colonial knowledge system? The challenge of “missing voices” within the social scientific theory, in general, has provoked the decolonial philosopher, Hamid Dabashi (2015) to pause this fundamental question as title of his book: “Can Non-Europeans Think?”. In response to this question, the decolonial scholar Walter D. Mignolo who wrote the foreword to this book responds: “Yes, We Can” to signify that the gift of “thinking” is not a sole prerogative of the Western subject.

The question of the contribution to knowledge production by those whose voices are excluded, silenced and peripherized by the modern/colonial knowledge system is an important question within the scholarship of CE not just because there is a need to produce a truly planetary understanding of this very important idea, but also because knowledge produces realities and experiences that affect even those whose voices are excluded. Thus, the fact that there is co-production between knowledge and reality means that the consequences of knowledge produced by a few affect multitudes who never participated in its production—a development that points to the idea that epistemic injustice can translate to social injustice in practice. This also speaks to the danger of projecting provincially produced perspectives as universal theories since the negative consequences of such provincial theories tend to affect all “knowledge-by-standers” at a universal scale. The classic example is that of economic theories behind a capitalist system by a few elites that affect the whole population of workers and would-be workers even though they had no input in their formulation. When writing on the knowledge—reality nexus, Mignolo and Walsh argued that:



What matters is not economics, or politics or history, but knowledge [...] Ontology is made of epistemology. That is, ontology is an epistemological concept [...] (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 135)

The realization that experience is a product of epistemology is one of those important realizations that can serve the modern world from the ravages of extractive economic practices—practices that deplete and exhaust the natural environment without reciprocity. Many of the interventions that are currently designed to put substance into the idea of “sustainable development”, for example, have a tendency of overlooking the “cognitive empire” that lies hidden beneath the destructive economic practices yet any positive change to the current capitalist economic system lies in those epistemologies and practices that are excluded from the dominant or mainstream economic paradigm. With the current discourse on decolonization making in-roads into the formal education curricular, an idea such as that of CE can benefit from our understanding of how it is conceived from the point of view of indigenous epistemologies and practices that are often excluded by the mainstream knowledge system. These are the epistemologies with a different conception of the relationship between economy and nature beyond the narrow purview of modern economic thinking where nature is just but a “natural resource” for human beings to extract without replenishing.

This special call for papers, therefore, is intended to explore not only the meanings of CE from an indigenous knowledge perspective but also explore how certain indigenous epistemologies on this subject matter dovetail with this already burgeoning idea. There is no presumption that indigenous knowledges of the non-Western world always deviate from the dominant Western worldview in any subject matter hence we welcome contributions that indicate areas of convergence, appropriate negotiation as well as those that are critical of CE. Similarly, we do not make a presumption that the dominant Western worldview is not indigenous to Western nations but our starting point is that it masquerades as the universal to the detriment of different contexts and cultures across time and space.

This guest edited special issue is motivated by an understanding that the modern world and its capitalist political economy have created modern challenges whose solutions cannot be found in the very modern knowledge system that sustains it but in other knowledge(s) that have all along been excluded. We, therefore, seek a “pluri-versal” understanding of CE and its usefulness. Of particular interest to the editors are the papers that link theory and praxis in revealing ways. Though we will privilege papers reveal the epistemologies and experiences of CE of the people who exist on the dominated side of the colonial power differential, we will also accept those that explore CE from the dominant side as long as they show how such thinking and practices are indigenous to their locale. The following is a list of themes that the editorial team thought can enrich this proposed edited volume, but contributors are free to come up with their own take on the subject matter:

- (1) The meaning and essence of the CE
- (2) Indigenous cosmologies and CE
- (3) Indigeneity, CE and Development
- (4) African perspectives on CE
- (5) Afrocentric Perspective on CE
- (6) Aboriginality and Circular Economy
- (7) Coloniality of Nature, Indigeneity and CE
- (8) Geo-politics of knowledge and CE

- (9) The participation indigenous people in CE
- (10) Indigenous epistemologies and CE
- (11) Rurality and Indigeneity in CE
- (12) Decolonial Perspectives on CE
- (13) Reflections on the local practices of indigenous communities in CE
- (14) The role of indigenous women in CE
- (15) Gendered indigenous perspectives on CE

Deadline for submission of full papers: 30 November 2022

Feedback of reviewed papers to authors: 30 April 2023

Forecasted Date for Publication: 30 January 2024

For more information regarding guideline for authors – <http://regeusp.com.br/>

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References

Dabashi, H. (2015). *Can Non-Europeans Think?* London: ZED Books.

Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. E. (2018). *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.