

RESET CRADLE Seminar Series for the Academic Year 2022-2023

April 13 (Thursday),

(13:45-) 14:00-16:30 (local time in Johannesburg/Cape Town/Harare/Lilogwe/Mbombela/Zomba)

(14:45-) 15:00-17:30 (local time in Tampere/Helsinki)



Panelists and discussants:

Josef de Beer

Louis Botha

Charles Chikunda

Delme Cupido

Dick Kachilonda

Sibongile Masuku

Gibson Mphepo

Kenneth Mlungisi Ngcoza

Online panel discussion
**“Africa’s indigenous ways of knowing
meet
cultural-historical activity theory”**

Timetable

13:45-16:30*

*Local time in Johannesburg/Cape Town/Harare/ Lilongwe/Mbombela/Zomba

13:45-14:00

Opening of the virtual room (log in, test their mics, chat & socialise before a timely start)

14:00-14:10

Introduction of the panel and the panelists (10 min)

<p><u>Panel Part 1:</u></p> <p>14:10-14:40 10 min presentations from the first three panelists (Drs Masuku, Mphepo, Botha)</p> <p>14:40-14:50 Comments from Dr Charles Chikunda (UNESCO, Harare, Zimbabwe) and Prof. Kenneth Mlungisi Ngcoza (Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa) to the first three panelists</p> <p>14:50-15:00 Questions from the audience to the panelists</p> <p>15:00-15:15 Responses from the panelists (5 min each)</p> <p>15:15-15:20 Break</p>	<p><u>Panel Part 2:</u></p> <p>15:20-15:50 10 min presentations from the second three panelists (Drs Kachilonda, de Beer, Cupido)</p> <p>15:50-16:00 Comments from Dr Charles Chikunda (UNESCO, Harare, Zimbabwe) and Prof. Kenneth Mlungisi Ngcoza (Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa) to the second three panelists</p> <p>16:00-16:10 Questions from the audience to the panelists</p> <p>16:10-16:25 Responses from the panelists (5 min each)</p>
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16:25-16:30 Concluding words (5 min)



Description and aim of the panel

This event is organized with the help of seed funding from the Global Innovation Network for Teaching and Learning (GINTL) targeted to the African context and channeled by the Faculty of Education and Culture at Tampere University, Finland in collaboration with scholars from the University of Mpumalanga, Pact Malawi, the University of Witwatersrand, LEAD SEA Leadership for Environment and Development Southern and Eastern Africa, University of the Western Cape, and Southern Africa Hub for Natural Justice.

The event is a first of a series of panels, seminars and workshops on ways in which indigenous theories and practices can be brought into fruitful dialogue with cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) for developing just, equitable and sustainable ways of living, producing and organizing.

The long-term aim is to offer globally accessible spaces for indigenous theories from Africa and for CHAT to interact and explore strategies for tackling the most acute systemic challenges of our time, from climate and biodiversity crises, to poverty and exclusion, to nationalism, militarization and threat of nuclear winter. We believe that indigenous theories and CHAT align with one another in that they build on a dialectical understanding of struggles as deeply rooted in history and as requiring collective efforts to grasp their essence in terms of ever evolving processes and relations.

The panel welcome academics, experts and practitioners across sectors, as well as students interested in Africa's indigenous ways of knowing to set up an agenda whereby we can begin what we hope to become a sustained and fruitful dialogue.

List of the panelists and their topics

PhD **Louis Botha**, Senior Lecturer, Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa:
"Aligning the relational dimensions of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and indigenous ways of knowing"

Human Right Lawyer **Delme Cupido**, Director of the Southern Africa Hub for Natural Justice, Cape Town, South Africa:
"Reflections on the use of Bio-cultural Community Protocols in Working With Indigenous Peoples"

Prof. **Josef de Beer**, Director of the Science Learning Centre for Africa, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa:
"Science teachers learning about indigenous knowledge systems: The affordances of cultural-historical activity theory as research lens"

PhD **Dick Kachilonda**, Governance and Decentralization Specialist, Restoring Fisheries for Sustainable Livelihoods in Lake Malawi, Pact, Lilongwe, Malawi:
"Indigenous knowledge and practices in developing sustainable ways of living in Malawi fisheries sector using Cultural Historical Activity Theory"

PhD **Sibongile Masuku**, Senior Lecturer, University of Mpumalanga, Mbombela, South Africa: *"When Culture and Nature Collides: The case of the leopard skin and the feather of the purple crested turaco"*

PhD **Gibson Mphemo**, Deputy Director, Leadership for Environment and Development Southern and Eastern Africa (LEAD SEA), Zomba, Malawi:
"Informal learning by rural women practicing traditional farming practices in the Lake Chilwa Basin, Malawi: Towards coping and adaptation to climate variability and climate change"

Abstracts from the panelists

“Aligning the relational dimensions of cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and indigenous ways of knowing”

Louis Botha, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

In this presentation I would like to argue that both cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) and indigenous research could enrich and support each other, both theoretically and as activist frameworks in pursuit of social justice, by bringing their relational dimensions into closer alignment. I would like to suggest that they can do this more effectively if the Marxist dialectics underpinning CHAT is reinterpreted so that it aligns more appropriately with the relationality of indigenous ways of knowing and being. I therefore propose that the concepts of *use value* and *exchange value* in the primary contradiction be reinterpreted as *indigenous value* and *western value* to account for the primacy of relationality in indigenous people’s activity, and the ways in which this relationality is undermined by coloniality. Similarly, it is put forth that the germ cell of this revised dialectic would not be the *commodity* but the *relationship*. These proposed re-conceptualizations are intended to take into account the ways in which indigenous people, through their activity in the context of capitalist production, are both affirmed and denigrated as relational beings under coloniality.

“Reflections on the use of Bio-cultural Community Protocols in Working With Indigenous Peoples”

Delme Cupido, Southern Africa Hub for Natural Justice, Cape Town, South Africa

Natural Justice has pioneered the use of Biocultural Community Protocols (BCPs) as a practical tool that outlines, asserts and affirms Indigenous communities’ rights to govern their territories, natural resources and knowledge, seeks to reverse past

dispossession, and articulates community-determined values and priorities as the basis for engaging with external actors. The tool has been recognized and validated in the Nagoya Protocol and several other international and national instruments of law.

BCPs articulate community-determined values, procedures and priorities. They set out rights and responsibilities under customary, state and international law as the basis for engaging with external “actors” such as governments, companies, academics and non-governmental organizations. They can be used as catalysts for constructive and proactive responses to threats and opportunities posed by land and resource development, conservation, research, and other legal and policy frameworks. BCPs act as an interface between customary laws and community governance structures on one side, and national and international frameworks.

Although each community protocol is adapted to its local context, it is generally a community-led instrument that promotes participatory advocacy for the recognition of and support for ways of life that are based on the customary sustainable use of biodiversity, according to standards and procedures set out in customary, national, and international laws and policies. While community protocols are not a panacea, they can contribute to meeting some of the challenges of Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS) implementation. In the context of ABS, BCPs provide a valuable approach to securing the involvement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and protecting their rights according to the Nagoya Protocol.

“Science teachers learning about indigenous knowledge systems: The affordances of cultural-historical activity theory as research lens”

Josef de Beer, Science Learning Centre for Africa, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

This paper focuses on the affordances of third-generation and nascent fourth-generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) as a research lens, when analyzing complex activity systems such as teacher professional development. The context is a design-based research study on short learning programmes (SLP’s) for natural sciences teachers.

The SLP’s focus on teacher professional development to contextualize science curriculum themes for culturally diverse learners through the infusion of indigenous knowledge. Teachers are shown how indigenous ways of knowing could be infused in curriculum themes, and how such epistemological border-crossing could best be facilitated. For instance, teachers

are shown how learners could engage in a Kirby Bauer protocol in the school laboratory to test the antimicrobial activity of medicinal plants that are used by indigenous knowledge holders. In the SLP's inquiry learning, cooperative learning and self-directed learning are emphasized.

The data (2016 – 2022) showed that, although the teachers benefited from the SLP's, and were more capable and enthusiastic to engage in transformed teaching practices after the intervention, transfer of the newly acquired knowledge and skills to the classroom did not take place in many cases. Third-generation CHAT provided insights into the tensions that negatively impacted on the realization of the activity system's 'object'. The 'contradiction of control' - a phrase referring to the fact that different stakeholders had different views and impact on the object- prompted the researchers to start planning the implementation of Change Laboratories, and the utilization of fourth-generation Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. Change Laboratories provide a space where all stakeholders engage in expansive learning, and attempt to come to a shared understanding of the object. By shifting the gaze to fourth generation CHAT, where all stakeholders are seen as different activity systems, researchers might gain insight in how tensions that corrode the realization of the object could be reduced.

“Indigenous knowledge and practices in developing sustainable ways of living in Malawi fisheries sector using Cultural Historical Activity Theory”

Dick Kachilonda, Pact, Lilongwe, Malawi

This presentation provides some critical indigenous knowledge insights and practices found while implementing fisheries biodiversity project using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) lenses in fisheries co-management approach. Fisheries co-management is an important democratizing strategy where responsibilities are equitably shared between government and the fishing community to achieve sustainable utilization of fisheries resources which contributes about 70% of animal protein to Malawi population. From time immemorial fisheries resources were managed by traditional leaders who used their indigenous ways of living and knew where and when different fish species breed. The traditional leaders' regulations revolved around controlling access to the annual spawning period of some species. The traditional approach was disrupted by the colonial and modernist forms of governance through centralized fisheries management which assumed that the traditional approach lacked more scientific and reliable technologies. Using CHAT to understand the disruption that was there for a long

time, using the Change Laboratory approach to understanding the loss in knowledge over the years due to less collaborative and in-depth engagement with the traditional systems, some key biodiversity insights were gained. Fishing communities highlighted the need to have and protect fish breeding areas to ensure fish breed throughout the year. Fishing communities also pointed out need to introduce closed season for both commercial and small-scale fishers to ensure different fish species are given enough time to breed and allow the young ones to grow. The expansive learning processes with different stakeholders including gear owners, crew members, fish traders, fish processors in Change Laboratory workshops provided in-depth debates and formulation of sustainable solutions to the issues. Consistent engagement with fishing communities, more than 260 community led fish breeding areas have been established by the communities themselves with management plans and by-laws to ensure they are well managed. In some sanctuaries/breeding areas fishing communities have started observing increase in fish biodiversity.

“When Culture and Nature Collides: The case of the leopard skin and the feather of the purple crested turaco”

Sibongile Masuku, University of Mpumalanga, Mbombela, South Africa

The wearing of skins and feathers for various purposes was a global common practice from time immemorial. It has remained dominantly worn in African countries to-date. The feather of *ligwalagwala* which is also known as the purple crested turaco is popularly worn by the monarchy of Eswatini and is considered as a symbol of royalty. *Sikhumba sengwe* - the skin of the leopard was originally the preserve of the monarch in Eswatini and recently of the Zulu. More males are wearing it and especially the youth. There is a paucity of published scientific writings on the increasing use of these natural objects for cultural purposes and commentary on the likely impact on the environment. This paper has South Africa and Eswatini as its context of the discussion focusing on the popular practice of wearing the leopard skin by the youth in traditional ceremonies and the adoption of the wearing of bird feathers most particularly of the purple crested turaco by the Zulu monarch of recent. The existence of both faunal species are likely to be seriously threatened by such practices. The paper shares community views and considers their potential in educating and protection of these faunal species.

“Informal learning by rural women practicing traditional farming practices in the Lake Chilwa Basin, Malawi: Towards coping and adaptation to climate variability and climate change”

Gibson Mphepo, LEAD SEA, Zomba, Malawi

Informal learning is a neglected research area in Malawi and beyond. Furthermore, rural women in Malawi are significant change agents in socio-economic sectors, yet they are heavily affected by inequality, including climate change injustices. A study was therefore conducted in the Lake Chilwa Basin, Malawi, to answer the question ‘how do drought and inter-seasonal dry spells influence informal learning processes to enable transformation adaptation among rural women engaged in traditional farming practices?’ Third generation Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) was used as an overarching theoretical framework to guide research processes in three phases: mirror data collection for expansive learning; formative change laboratory workshops; data analysis and reflection.

Through expansive learning, women gained agency. Nineteen contradictions were identified most of which relate to the Government of Malawi bias towards modern farming; traditional structures, norms and beliefs; and, religion. Solutions were proposed by women for each of the contradictions and some of these were tested for their workability. The research contributed new knowledge parcels on its innovative methodological processes; scenario learning; contradictions on traditional farming practices; and traditional ways of resolving some contradictions; indigenous ways of knowing status of traditional farming practices through idioms, proverbs, preaching, storytelling and symbols.