**Session Title: Decolonizing environmental geography and management**

**Name of Coordinator: Inocent Moyo**

**Abstract**

In Africa, studies of environmental management exclude indigenous knowledge systems but there is a preference for Eurocentric approaches to the conceptualization and practice of environmental management. In this panel, it is argued that the continued acceptance of the Eurocentric canon in the study and practice of environmental management is not only antithetical to the goals of decolonising the geography curriculum but also sustains coloniality as well as justifies and entrench the current land ownership patterns which is a legacy of colonial and apartheid land dispossession of indigenous/African people. This is a call for concrete steps which not only challenge Eurocentricity in the discipline of Geography but also the implementation of concrete steps to decolonise environmental geography and management. Consequently, this session engages with the coloniality of environmental management in Africa and why and how this needs to and must be decolonised to include indigenous knowledge systems of African people.

Keywords: Environmental management, Indigenous knowledge systems, Africa

Speaker 1

Environmental Management as the Panopticon

Inocent Moyo

This paper deploys the Foucauldian Panopticism to expand and deepen the analysis of the Environmental Management curriculum in an African context by pointing to its coloniality (Eurocentric epistemology of the curriculum) which is arguably intended to control and monitor what African people know about Environmental Management. The exclusion of the IKS in the curriculum in question can be taken to be a clear indication of controlling what people know and think about Environmental Management. The content of the curriculum is meant to control what academics and students know and think about Environmental Management as a European concept. It is therefore advanced that the Panopticon is the Environmental Management curriculum that reinforces and entrenches existing power structures and hierarchies.

Speaker 2:

Decolonizing Climate Change Adaptation: Exploring Indigenous Knowledge in uMkhanyakude District Municipality, South Africa

Jabulile H. Mzimela and Inocent Moyo

Abstract

Indigenous communities in South Africa actively challenge dominant Eurocentric worldviews and embrace the African Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) to respond to climate change impacts. This dynamic knowledge system introduces unique perspectives, objectives, and strategies in relation to adaptation, informed by geographical and cultural considerations. The efficacy of IKS in addressing climate change impacts is evident, underscoring IKS’s significance as a crucial resource for policymaking and interventions, particularly in light of the anticipated detrimental climate change impacts. Regrettably, IK has been relegated to the fringes of mainstream climate governance and policy-making, highlighting the need to liberate African IKS. This is the basis for advocating a decolonial approach that respects and validates the capacity of indigenous communities to establish their adaptation measures by drawing upon their IKS, as opposed to imposing top-down approaches based on Western epistemologies. Leveraging collective efficacy becomes pivotal in liberating these epistemologies, as demonstrated by uMkhanyakude District Municipality small-scale farmers. The process of decolonizing adaptation through IKS challenges existing power dynamics and ultimately leads to the development of appropriate, efficacious, and culturally sensitive climate adaptation measures.

Keywords: Climate change; Adaptation; Indigenous Knowledge Systems; Decolonization; South Africa

Speaker 3

 The trajectory of the land restitution processes in Protected Areas: implications for indigenous communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

Simphiwe LRG Xulu

This paper presents a discussion of one of the most talked about issue in South Africa, land reform. Land is a critical natural resource and a pillar of many African economies, including South Africa. However, most of these countries have faced colonial regimes which deprived citizens’ ownership of land. In the case of South Africa, after they gained their independence, they engaged on a journey to try and correct the injustices of the apartheid regime. In so doing, they implemented land reform policies to address land ownership inequalities. Nonetheless, the South African government has failed to deliver on the promises they made since coming into office. In the context of land within Protected Areas, land reform cases were settled through co-management agreements between communities and conservation areas. In as much as there are some success stories, this has also presented a lot of challenges to both the authorities and the indigenous communities. Given this background, this paper looks at the path that the land reform has taken in KwaZulu-Natal, especially within protected areas and how has that affected the communities.

Speaker 4

Evaluating the contribution of the indigenous knowledge system (IKS) in farming practices under protected areas in Okhahlamba, Drakensberg

Simphiwe Nokubonga Mthethwa

This paper evaluates the use of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in agricultural practices by rural small-scale farmers in Ukhahlamba Drakensberg. It argues that indigenous small-scale farmers utilise IKS in their farming practices. Acceptance of local people and their IKS as partners in the wider efforts towards sustainable agriculture is crucial. All this suggests that IKS around farming in places like the Drakensberg needs to be considered as an integral part of knowledge in farming if agriculture is to be sustainable and contribute towards the sustainable livelihoods of people in rural communities.