

Indigeneity, Community and Participatory Practice: Methods, Concepts and Perspectives from the Global South

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This special issue of [New Area Studies](#) offers a critical reflection via a range of case study projects that draw from experiences across the so-called 'global south'. These projects have mobilised critical and creative enquiry, historical and political contexts, audiovisual digital tools and artistic practices, alongside hyperlocal participatory approaches involving community-based partners from the earliest stages of project design. The overarching aim has been to identify, explore and better understand issues of urgency and priority to indigenous individuals and communities of the global south. The articles in this issue provide insightful and original analytical and empirical discussions about the importance and challenges of efforts to decolonise knowledge creation and dissemination; about gender and power dynamics – especially those between individual and collective, or organization-led identities; about the value of and threats to ancestral knowledge, including the risks of romanticization that might then block the path to meaningful solutions; about climate crisis and social (in)justice; memory and conflict; community participation and political influence; and about health and wellbeing in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic recovery. Along the way, we also learnt a great deal about the possibilities and constraints of transnational, interdisciplinary and multi-lingual collaborations.

In this special issue, we are delighted to include an article by Iris Jave, Tesania Velásquez and Grace Mendoza who write about the participatory and healing

methodologies they deployed that bring together approaches from the disciplines of Political Science and Psychology to work with women members of an Andean association of women victims of the armed conflict in Peru. Their work, which extended over several years between 2017 and 2023, had several aims: to enhance capability through political and policy training along with psychological support; to strengthen the relationship between ANFASEP and the organization's local context; and to create a research project with social responsibility. In his own detailed article, Jorge Ruiz Zevallos introduces us to collaborative and creative practices used for his work with young indigenous university students in Amazonian Peru using audiovisual methodologies to generate the production of new knowledge from the perspective of the young participants/research partners. His contribution emphasizes the need to consider local knowledge bases and to be open to their influence on decolonial and indigenous methodologies and research, while centring the voices and perspectives of the participants in collaborative filmmaking. In doing so, he underscores the crucial contributions of the participants in shaping the research methodology. Along similar lines, Hazel Marsh and Esteban Acuña offer their reflections on the use of art-led collaborative practices with the Romani population in Colombia. They also set the context by deploying a forensic historical approach to explain the Romani presence in Latin America and thereby convey important information that later corresponds to the art-based workshops they undertook with Romani representatives. They explain that the workshops were designed to create opportunities for the *referentes* (cultural mediators) who are relied upon by government authorities to identify issues of priority for Romani communities, and to co-create tools and resources that would support them in their work with those government bodies.

These are all notable as challenge-led, co-produced projects that incorporate interdisciplinary perspectives drawing on cultural studies, art, anthropology, politics and development. On the one hand, these approaches have given rise to the identification of the personal and collective knowledge and experiences of partners and participants, strengthening their sense and exercise of citizenship; and, on the other hand, they have prompted questions for the academy, offering new ways of doing research *with* indigenous communities, offering a decolonial perspective that starts from a position of recognizing the value diversity and interculturality.



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In this vein, and extending the modes of activity further, Thea Pitman and Paolo Pepe describe and analyze how they worked with Laryssa Machada, Antônio Vital Neto Pankararu, Bia Pankararu, Fykyá Pankararu in the project *Origem*, described as a 'queer kind of research project' that breaks with a unified narrator voice to reflect upon knowledge construction in academia and discussing the nature of the relationships built between different authors and participants in the project. Their aim is to transgress author production in academia and promote a decolonial approach to knowledge creation in collaborative work. As with all the articles presented, they seek to reveal the deep learning to be derived from the project without shying away from the tensions that this form of working can engender. Meanwhile, Mark Vicars, Ann Cheryl Armstrong and Peter Sipeli discuss the very idea of the 'Global South' as a disputed colonial category that carries the burden of the modern-traditional dichotomy. They do so by deploying the Fijian concept of the *Talanoa* (an integral part of Pacific storytelling) to introduce the personal, intimate connection between people in their everyday conversations. Their paper questions how positionality, power, relationships and affect are experienced and renegotiated through the *Talanoa*. Finally, we present the *Mujeres que influyen (Women of Influence)* project, a collaboration between researchers at University of East Anglia and Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, and young women from the Junín area of Peru who are members of the National Council of Indigenous Women of Peru (ONAMIAP/OMIAASEC). The women-led team of researcher-participants acknowledge that although women play a fundamental role in the preservation of biodiversity and ancestral knowledge, these contributions often go unrecognized and underdeveloped (Ketty Marcelo, 2018), to the detriment of the very culture and environment that should be preserved. The paper reflects on how to rethink issues of sustainability and resilience and how to co-design alternative (participatory, creative) strategies that respond through gender dynamics to address political ecologies and environmental challenges.

The articles in this special issue show different ways of collaborative working and discuss their potential to succeed in their academic, artistic and activist mission to exert influence on policy and community change through action-research approaches along with deep learning, listening, trust-building and mutual understanding. We explore the textures, tensions and dynamics of these collaborative practices in a range



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of ethnographic and qualitative case study examples. At the same time as marking their value, we acknowledge the inevitable challenges of pursuing such complex projects, and each contribution shares recommendations for 'good/better practice' that embrace logistical, intellectual, conceptual and ethical concerns.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the editors-in-chief of *New Area Studies*, Professors Susan Hodgett and Thomas Ruys Smith, for their support and belief in this work. The editors of this special issue would also like to thank all the writers and creators for such powerful, original, insightful contributions to this new area of interdisciplinary, transnational, multilingual, participatory work. Mostly, though, we would like to thank ALL the individuals, communities and organizations whose work and lives, indeed their lived experiences, have provided the reason for this issue to exist. All contributions are detailed and names (with permissions) are given within the articles and indeed we consider them to be co-producers of this issue (although as co-editors we take full responsibility for it). We are indebted to them all for their generosity of spirit, for their trust and belief in us as partners, for their creativity, determination and energy. We firmly believe that there is an urgent need to recuperate and respect the ancestral knowledge, customs, languages, cultures, ways of being that underpin those solutions and that the (creative) solutions to the planet's greatest challenges lie with them.