

Co-LABorate 2 Stakeholder Workshop:
 Preserving and Transferring Indigenous Knowledge in a Digital World



10-12 March 2025

Room: 243

German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA)
 Neuer Jungfernstieg 21, 20354 Hamburg, Germany

With the support of:



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MS Teams Link	Digital Databases and Visualization on Indigenous Knowledge: A Continuous Map
	

Background

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) define "indigenous" as referring to people, cultures, and communities native to a particular geographical region, having existed there for a long period before the arrival of outside populations or influences. Key aspects of the UN's definition include unique traditions, languages, and social systems that are distinct from those of the *society-at-large*, as well as a deep connection to their ancestral lands.

In the context of global sustainability transformation, there is a need to reclaim—or decolonize—the meaning of "indigenous" and "traditional" and how they relate to human flourishing and sustainability. Indigenous communities are often perceived as traditional, backward-looking, and underdeveloped, partly because of their historical marginalization, lack of access to modern infrastructure and education, and the preservation of their traditions and rituals (Smith, 2012, Escobar, 1995).

Traditional and indigenous wisdoms offer holistic views of care, integrating community, environment, and spirituality (Storm, 2021, Chang and Bai, 2016), which can effectively complement modernist views for example on technological innovation and climate protection. Furthermore, indigenous wisdom is not homogenous, and there are significant differences between the bodies of knowledge of indigenous communities. In their own way, diverse indigenous perspectives challenge Western paradigms by emphasizing relationships and interconnectedness, presenting care as an all-encompassing practice rooted in the symbiosis of human and natural systems.

To fully harness the rich knowledge of indigenous communities, it is essential for us to navigate with them the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by today's rapidly evolving digital age. Historically marginalized, these communities often face limited access to modern technologies, which can deepen their exclusion. Moreover, the digital era introduces new risks, including the misappropriation and exploitation of their traditions, rituals, and practices, adding to the injustices they already endure.

At the same time, the digital age offers unprecedented opportunities for Indigenous peoples to preserve, revitalize, and share their cultural heritage while also gaining new tools for education, economic development, and self-determination. By embracing digital platforms, Indigenous communities can document and disseminate their languages, stories, and traditional practices, ensuring they are passed down to future generations. Moreover, digital tools provide a means to connect with a global audience, fostering greater understanding and collaboration across cultures.

Goals and objectives:

The main goal of the workshop is to identify and address the essential challenges and opportunities for global transformation towards sustainability through the preservation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge in a digital age. In addition, the workshop aims to recognize and honor indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

To achieve these goals, the workshop adopts innovative dialogue and knowledge transfer formats inspired by indigenous communities. These approaches foster active listening, respect for diverse perspectives, integration of personal experiences and traditional knowledge, consensus-building, and a strong emphasis on relationships.

The workshop brings together leading scholars, practitioners and representatives of indigenous communities to answer important questions:

Session 1: State of the Art: Current Challenges and Opportunities for Indigenous Knowledge in the Digital Age

In the digital age, indigenous knowledge faces several challenges and opportunities. Challenges include lack of reliable access to the internet and computers, and digital literacy education as well as cultural appropriation and misrepresentation. Opportunities include preservation and revitalization through digitization of traditional knowledge, oral histories, and cultural artifacts as well as community empowerment through digital storytelling and advocacy in social media.

In this panel, we want to set the stage for all discussions. We call on representatives from various indigenous communities to present the current challenges their communities are confronted with and which opportunities they see for preservation through the integration of indigenous knowledge with modern (digital) technology.

- *What are the current challenges that confront indigenous communities and how does digitalization exacerbate the negative effects of their marginalization?*
- *What are the knowledge tools used to record, disseminate and preserve stories, myths, traditions and practices that embody indigenous people's wisdom?*
- *How can digital platforms be designed to facilitate the intergenerational transfer of indigenous wisdom within communities?*

Session 2: Indigenous Knowledge as Enabler of Global Sustainability Transformation

Indigenous communities, with their deep-rooted knowledge of sustainable living, are key drivers of global sustainability. Their traditional ecological practices offer vital insights into resource management, biodiversity conservation, and climate resilience. As guardians of some of the planet's most biodiverse regions, Indigenous peoples are leading efforts to protect our global commons. By blending indigenous wisdom with modern sustainability practices, they are shaping a more sustainable and equitable future, making them essential partners in addressing global environmental challenges

In this session, we explore how indigenous knowledge can offer new and alternative imaginaries on social institutions - *politics, economics, technology, religion, gender, and education* - that underpin contemporary societies, which are key to global sustainability transformation. In this regard, we want to ask the following questions:

- *Which alternative ways of seeing and designs of social institutions are offered by indigenous knowledge that can help dismantle path dependencies and dominance structures such as toxic hypermasculinity?*
- *How can indigenous knowledge systems inform and enhance modern technological, entrepreneurial, educational, and scientific practices to promote global sustainability transformation?*

Session 3: Strategies for Addressing New and Old (In)Justices to Indigenous People

Indigenous people around the world face a variety of injustices, often stemming from historical colonization, systemic discrimination, and ongoing marginalization. The emergence of digital technologies such as artificial intelligence may endanger their cultural preservation through language loss, and cultural appropriation. Furthermore, new challenges are emerging in the digital age as some existing guardrails for the preservation of indigenous knowledge are removed. At the same time, digital innovation can offer opportunities to help indigenous people achieve representation, autonomy, economic inclusion and adaptation to climate change.

In this session, we focus on the interface between the public and private sector to identify good practices from various stakeholders to address injustices to indigenous communities. These practices include capacity building, policy and legal reforms, fair business models and community-led initiatives.

- *Which new injustices towards the indigenous communities are emerging in the digital age?*
- *How can digital innovation help address injustices that confront indigenous communities such as the misappropriation and exploitation of indigenous wisdom?*

Session 4: Connecting Global and Regional Visions with Local Solutions – Improving the Role of Indigenous Knowledge in Shaping Global Interactions

The connection between global visions of sustainability and local solutions is a crucial aspect of global transformation to address complex challenges such as climate change and social justice. Preserving and transferring indigenous knowledge is important in finding context-specific strategies and actions that meet the unique needs of individual communities.

This session aims to understand how to enhance the potentials of indigenous knowledge in leveraging local knowledge, resources, and expertise to realize global visions of sustainability and human flourishing.

- *How can digital innovation help connect global and regional visions with the local solutions offered by indigenous knowledge?*
- *How can international cooperation support the digital preservation and transfer of indigenous knowledge (and vice-versa)?*

Session 5: Indigeneity models of a sustainable future

Indigenous knowledge is essential to shaping the future we envision. Indigenous thinkers provide transformative models in finance, economy, innovation, education, governance, international relations, and social cohesion that have the potential to revolutionize our world.

This session showcases groundbreaking models of indigeneity, presented by dynamic young thinkers, activists, and practitioners who are driving these visionary ideas forward. The session asks the following question:

- *How can indigenous knowledge bring us into the future we envision?*

Outcome of the workshop:

By bringing together scholars, policymakers, and representatives of indigenous communities, the workshop seeks to strengthen existing networks and advance knowledge on human flourishing and global transformation. Specifically, it aims to produce a workshop report, a journal article, and a policy brief based on insights from impulse talks and discussions. However, participation in these publications is optional, allowing attendees to opt out if they wish. Additionally, leveraging a digital platform, the workshop will showcase indigenous wisdom alongside digital tools and projects that capture stories, myths, terminologies, rituals, and practices—offering alternative perspectives for reimagining social institutions and driving sustainability transformations.

Transfer for Transformation (T4T): Bridging Academia, Policy, and Society

The [Transfer for Transformation \(T4T\)](#) initiative by GIGA, supported by the Leibniz-Gemeinschaft through its Leibniz Competition grant, T95/2021, enhances knowledge exchange between scholars, policymakers, and the public. Through staff exchanges with the German Federal Foreign Office (FFO), public engagement, and research on knowledge transfer, T4T ensures research informs policy.

Key multi-stakeholder engagement programs include the Co-LABorate series, featuring:

- [Responsible Economic Statecraft](#), fostering policy discussions on balancing security, efficiency, and resilience.
- Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge, exploring how digital tools can support Indigenous communities in safeguarding their cultural heritage.
- Enhancing Biodiversity through Voluntary Sustainability Standards, promoting sustainable global supply chains.

By fostering global collaboration, T4T strengthens evidence-based policymaking and inclusive knowledge dissemination.

Agenda

March 10, 2025

8:30 Registration and Housekeeping

9:00 – 10:30 Welcome and Introduction (Room 243):

Welcome:

- **Eckart Woertz** (Director, GIGA Institute for Middle East Studies)

Group Photo

Situated in-place Exercise (30 min.)

Introduction (10 min. each):

- **Ariel Hernandez** (GIGA) *Elephants in the Room: Rethinking Indigenous Knowledge and Research Paradigms*
- **Daniela Osorio Michel** (GIGA) *Critical self-reflection on research on indigeneity*
- **Eduardo Valencia** (GIGA) *What do we want to do? - Digital databases and visualization on indigenous knowledge*

Keynote Address (15 min.):

- **Arukapé Suruí** (Suruí community) *Rooted in wisdom, flourishing in sovereignty: Indigenous knowledge, self-determined and unbound* (in Portuguese, with translation)

10:30 – 11:00 Coffee break

11:00 - 12:30 Session 1 – State of the Art: Current challenges and opportunities for Indigenous Knowledge in the Digital Age (Room 243)

Moderators: Daniela Osorio Michel (GIGA) and Shirley Mamani (Aymara community)

Impulse Givers (10 min. each):

- **Juana Arely Romo López** (Zapotec community) *Can a positivist market-driven approach to renewable energy be translated into Zapotec language and culture – Social media, (dis)information, and clashes in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Mexico* (in Spanish with real-time translation)
- **Analyñ Salvador-Amores** (Uni of the Philippines-Baguio), *Digital repatriation and the Cordilleras - Accessing cultural materials through digital tools*
- **Ana Rosa de Lima** (Meli), *Climate justice in the Amazon region*
- **Aina Helene Guttorm Einarsen** (Sámi community/Uni of Oslo) *Differentiation between Sámi and Norwegian/Western scientific practices and ways of knowing*

Ayllu aruskipaña: Andean Collective Dialogue (45 minutes)

Rooted in harmonious encounter (Tantachäwi), reciprocity (Ayni), and community well-being (Suma Qamaña), Suma jakaña embodies the Andean cosmovision, which means “live well, die well” and emphasizes harmonious relationships between humans, nature, and the spiritual world.

Following the opening by Shirley, participants will be divided into five groups. Each group will appoint a facilitator to guide the discussion, ensuring that diverse perspectives are represented. Participants will contribute from specific viewpoints, including: 1) Senior, 2) Youth, 3) Indigenous participants, 4) Non-Indigenous participants, 5) Women, 6) Non-researchers

When speaking, participants will explicitly identify the perspective from which they are contributing. Each one will answer the questions: 1) How am I doing? 2) How does the lack of internet and computer access affect my community? 3) Do I see cases of knowledge theft, misrepresentation, or cultural appropriation in digital spaces? 4) How can we use digital tools to share our stories, knowledge, and traditions?

The dialogue within each group will culminate in a collective commitment, formalizing shared insights and responsibilities. The gathering will conclude with a ceremonial closing, reinforcing the communal and spiritual significance of the exchange.

Group 1 (Room 550), Group 2 (Room 546), Group 3 (Room 531), Group 4 (Room 503) and 5 (Room 243)

12:30 LUNCH

14:00 – 16:00 Session 2 – Indigenous Knowledge as Enabler of Global Sustainability Transformation (Room 243)

Moderators: Ariel Hernandez (GIGA) and Wakanyi Hoffman (Uni Utrecht)

Impulse Givers (10 min. each):

- **Ian Hughes** (Uni College Cork) Conceptualizing global cultural transformation – The role of indigenous knowledge
- **Maggie O’Neill** (University College Cork) *Indigenous knowledge and hypermasculinity*
- **Richard Hecht** (UC Santa Barbara) *The Significance of Myth*
- **Modestha Mensah** (Uni of Cape Coast, Ghana) *Intersectionality for global transformation – The value of African, feminist, class lens*

Group work: Digital Storytelling (60 minutes)

Storytelling is crucial to most indigenous communities. Participants are divided into five groups. Within an hour, each group will develop and record a digital story (2-3 min. long). The story can 1) explain a concept, 2) reflect on a personal experience, 3) retell a historical event, or 4) make an argument, addressing any issue related to the impulse talks. The stories will be heard in the plenary. The steps to create a digital story are the following: brainstorm what you want the digital story to be about, create a script and a storyboard (use the boards provided), create a video by recording a voiceover, gather or create images or videoclips, choose music and sound effect and put all the elements together and enjoy the final product. The final script will be run through an Indigenous AI system ([Awakin AI](#)) to produce a story that is rooted in the oral storytelling format of indigenous storytelling.

Group 1 (Room 550), Group 2 (Room 546), Group 3 (Room 531), Group 4 (Room 503), Group 5 (Room 545), Groups 6, and 7 (Room 243)

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break

16:30 – 18:00 Session 3 – Strategies for Addressing (In)Justices to Indigenous People (Room 243)
 Moderators: Maggie O’Neill (Uni College Cork) & Wakanyi Hoffman (Uni Utrecht)

Impulse Givers (10 min. each):

- **Kert Stavorn** (The Exodus Road) *Emerging technologies for justice – Lessons from indigenous communities in the Asia Pacific Region*
- **Paola Velasco Herrejon** (Uni of Oslo), *Outlook on energy (in)justice from the Sámi and Zapotec communities*
- **María Alvarez Malvido** (Awana Digital) *Co-designing mapping tools with Indigenous Earth Defenders for socioenvironmental justice and data sovereignty*
- **Kenneth Amaeshi** (European Uni Institute/ The New Institute) *Community-based businesses as drivers of sustainable capitalism*

Discussant (from indigenous lens): Anlyn Salvador-Amores (University of the Philippines-Baguio) (5 min.)

Ubuntu Dialogue (45 minutes)

After the impulse talks and discussant input, the plenary engages in a dialogue grounded in the spirit of Ubuntu, recognizing our shared responsibility and interconnectedness. The discussion centers on two key questions:

- *Where are indigenous people experiencing new forms of exclusion in the digital world?*
- *What narratives are being shaped online about indigenous knowledge, and how do they misrepresent indigenous perspectives?*
- *What role should governments, businesses, and communities play in safeguarding indigenous knowledge?*

Through this exchange, participants acknowledge that sustainable solutions emerge not from isolated efforts but from mutual accountability, collective intelligence and a deep commitment to continued co-creation process.

19:00 Event dinner, Halo Restaurant, Colonnaden 104, 20354 Hamburg

11 March 2025

9:00 – 12:30 Session 4 - Connecting global visions with local solutions – Capacity building for indigenous knowledge to help shape global cooperation (Room 243)
 Moderators: Ian Hughes (Uni College Cork), Wakanyi Hoffman (Uni Utrecht) & Viktoria Sukhomlinova (The New Institute)

Impulse Givers (10 min. each):

- **Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby** (De la Salle University), *International relations as framework for indigenous knowledge*
- **Sangeeta Mahapatra** (GIGA), *Large language models for platforms to preserve digital knowledge and local languages*
- **Laura Soto** (Meli) *Scaling up regenerative practices starting from the Amazon indigenous communities*

- **Wakanyi Hoffman** (Utrecht University), *Ubuntu ethics for sustainable AI use and design*

(10:30 – 11:00 Coffee Break)

Talking Circles (60 min.)

After the talks, the participants will be divided into four groups, each of which represents a peace circle. Inspired by peace circles of indigenous communities of North America, including First Nations, Métis and Inuits, a talking object is passed around, granting the holder the right to speak while others listen.

Inspired by the talks, the circle members of each group will tell a personal story of how a local solution can help shape global cooperation.

Circle 1: Laura Sotto (Meli) (moderator) (Room 243)

Circle 2: Ivani Pauli (Meli Bees) (Room 545)

Circle 3: Modestha Mensah (Uni Cape Coast) (moderator) (Room 503)

Circle 4: Julia Kramer (GIGA) (moderator) (Room 546)

Circle 5: Victoria Sukhomlinova (The New Institute) (moderator) (Room 550)

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

14:00 – 16:30 Session 5 – Indigeneity models of a sustainable future (Room 243)

Moderators: Charmaine Misalucha-Willoughby (De la Salle University) and Ariel Hernandez (GIGA)

Impulse givers (10 min. each):

- **Ariel Hernandez** (GIGA) *Homo Curans – A future based on care*
- **Shirley Mamani** (Aymara community) *A future of agri-food systems – opportunities from the high Andean “superfoods”*
- **Rami Zurayk** (American University of Beirut) *A future of indigenous agroecological knowledge – Insights from Bilad al Sham*
- **Enoc López Toledo** (Zapotec community) *The role of indigenous language and knowledge in consultation processes of energy futures*

(Coffee break, 15:00 – 15:30)

Polynesian Dialogue One-to-One (60 minutes)

This dialogue format, inspired by the indigenous traditions in Polynesia, is a cultural practice that fosters the co-construction, sharing, and contextualization of knowledge. Rooted in the “situation in-place” exercise from the Introduction Session, participants are encouraged to select a discussion partner from a different “situation” (e.g., gender, age, origin, profession) to explore the central question:

How can indigenous knowledge guide us toward the future we envision?

Before addressing this question, each pair engages in a reflective dialogue by answering the following questions on situatedness and motivation:

- *How have you been? Share what life has been like for you recently.*

- *Is it possible to discuss this issue in our current space (e.g., Hamburg, research institute)? If so, why? If not, where would be a more suitable space?*
- *Can I, or how can I, play a meaningful role in this tandem? How can I be part of the future we envision? Reflect on the most significant personal change that enables you to consider how indigenous knowledge can shape the future.*

This approach fosters deep listening, mutual understanding, and the meaningful integration of indigenous wisdom into forward-looking perspectives.

Available rooms for the tandem talks: Room 550, 546, 545, 531, 503, 243

16:30 – 17:30 Closing Panel (Room 243) – What now? What to do with the elephants?

Moderators: Wakanyi Hoffman & Ariel Hernandez

12 March 2025, Wednesday

“Hamburg Tour” – Discussion with Hamburg Representatives and EU-LAC Foundation

9:45 – 12:00 “Of Treasure Chests and Pepper Sacks” – Hamburg’s Port in Unequal Global Trade

Depart from Altershof Lobby at 9:15

Location: Am Anleger Vorsetzen / City-Sporthafen, Barkassen-Centrale Ehlers (U-Bahn Station: Baumwall, Exit Überseebrücke)

Description: [Alternative Harbor Tour: Trade with the Global South](#)

Organized by “[Harbour Group Hamburg](#),” a civil society organization that is part of the international solidarity movement, the boat tour points out the injustices of world trade.

Where does our coffee come from? Where is the world's largest warehouse for oriental carpets hidden? And why does the extremely poor Liberia have one of the world's largest merchant fleets? Take a journey behind the scenes of brick walls and container bridges. The tour covers coffee and cocoa, soybeans and bananas, jeans and arms.

This boat tour illustrates the background of global trade with Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It explains why coffee and cocoa have become so cheap, why scrap metal is an export hit, and who profits from the extremely unequal trade between the Global North and the Global South.

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch Break

14:30 - 16:00 Meeting at the EULAC Foundation

The European Union – Latin America and Caribbean International Foundation (EU–LAC Foundation), an international organisation established by the 33 states of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), the 27 member states of the European Union (EU), and the EU itself, with the mission to strengthen the strategic partnership between EU and LAC regions, with its headquarters in Hamburg, Germany, hereinafter referred to as the **EU–LAC Foundation**