



**regions
refocus**

Post-Colonialisms Today

A project to recapture post-Independence African agency and progressive policies for our times

Intergenerational Meeting Concept Note

Intergenerational Meeting
25 February - 1 March 2019
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

As part of *Post-Colonialisms Today*, an intergenerational dialogue will be convened in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and will take place between 25 February and 1 March, 2019. The dialogue will bring together different "generations" of progressive development policy scholars, activist intellectuals, policy makers and other practitioners as well as the researchers involved in the *Post-Colonialisms Today* project.

The dialogue aims to facilitate reflection on the evolution of the development policy experience in Africa since the immediate post-colonial period and discuss the relevance of progressive post-independence policies to contemporary challenges. The dialogue will also provide opportunity for commentary on the preliminary results of the research being undertaken under the project.

Post-Colonialisms Today is a research¹ and advocacy project, which aims to revisit immediate post-independence African progressive policy with a view to working out what can usefully be applied in the context of contemporary African development challenges. The project focuses on policies adopted and/or formulated by governments and (inter-governmental) institutions in Africa in the immediate post-Independence period with a view to changing the structures of political economy inherited from colonialism, so as to fulfil the popular aspirations of the anti-colonial movement.

A key point of departure for the project is the fact that the neo-liberal paradigm that has dominated development policy in Africa with the onset of the World Bank/IMF-inspired structural adjustment policies has been a systematic and largely successful ideological onslaught on any and all forms of alternative developmental policy, thought, and practice that preceded or exist(ed) alongside it. As part of its "success," neo-liberalism has obscured (and worsened) the critical challenges of Africa's political economy that shaped immediate post-Independence development policy, the continuing relevance of which it has now only belatedly and tendentiously acknowledged. In the process, the alternative paradigms of development policy, and years of fertile and creative thinking in response to

¹ The research phase of the project is already underway with nine researchers selected from an [open call for proposals](#) engaged in preparing papers. See the annex for a full list of researchers and topics.

the systemic issues inherent in the political economy of Africa seem to have all but disappeared from mainstream scholarship. This ideological hegemony has disconnected recent generations of progressive activists and intellectuals from the earlier body of knowledge and thought, often forcing them to re-invent the wheel, as it were, in attempts to formulate alternatives to neo-liberalism. Equally important, this earlier body of thinking and knowledge does not seem to have benefited from the kind of refinement or renewal for contemporary settings that would have been attained through sustained and rigorous engagement.

The aim of the intergenerational dialogue is to contribute to building interlinkages between these different phases of progressive thinking in development policy, to generate the cross-fertilisation of ideas necessary for advancing progressive alternatives to neo-liberalism in our times.

Three **broad and overlapping** "generations" are targeted for the dialogue. The first consists of policymakers and progressive intellectuals of the 1950s through the 1970s. This refers to much of the groups of scholars, activist intellectuals and policy makers who essentially laid the foundations of progressive post-Independence policy, many of whom played direct and indirect roles in designing policy concepts and frameworks, formulating policy agenda, and/or in building the institutions that were later subject to much of the neo-liberal bonfire of alternative ideas. The second generation refers to those who "came of age" in the years of the crisis of post-Independence development and formed part of the critique of the systemic failures of that period, but also straddled the emergence of neo-liberal structural adjustment, and have challenged (and continued to challenge) the latter's attempts to portray itself as appropriate response to the crises (of post-independence development policy). The third generation is those who came into progressive scholarship and activism in the context of the dominance of neo-liberalism and whose struggles to fashion a critique to that paradigm have been waged under its hegemony.

It bears emphasis that these are essentially broad groupings without hard demarcations, which necessarily overlap, inform, and influence each other. Nevertheless, the essential problematics of their progressive engagement with development policy are influenced by their respective "immediate" contexts. These contexts lend each generation distinct insights into previous implementation, shortcomings, political trajectory, etc. of progressive development policy. The goal of this gathering is to cultivate these nuances or differences of perspective for a fruitful exchange contributing to holistic recovery of the value of earlier policies for contemporary challenges.

Objectives and Format of the Dialogue

The issues to be discussed and the format of the meeting will be structured to attain some concrete outcomes:

First is to facilitate discussion which explores:

- (a) questions and challenges stemming from the colonial experience which continue to structure the development agenda in Africa, and their evolution after political independence;
- (b) debates and contestations that shaped immediate post-colonial, and assesses the relevance of these to contemporary struggles;
- (c) contemporary challenges for African development, exploring how they can be traced back to, (re)informed by, or differentiated from earlier phases of post-independence development

Secondly, researchers will present their draft papers for comments and other forms of input (collective or otherwise, see footnote 1).

Thirdly, the dialogue will explore the future evolution of the *Post-Colonialism Today* project, not simply in terms of the post-research advocacy phase, but also the different ways in which the spirit of the project and its motivation can be carried forward.