The Global South is characterised by rapid socioeconomic, cultural and political change whose impacts are felt throughout the world. Typical signs of the upheavals involved include increasing economic interconnectedness, growing social inequality and destruction of natural resources. The countries worst affected are those long labelled ‘developing’ countries from a Northern perspective. GSSC aims to investigate and highlight possible causes and consequences of these processes of change.

“Global labour migration – from colonial times to the present day – has many facets which call for an interdisciplinary approach. This is the only way to capture the complex social, political, economic and cultural interconnections and dynamics across the Global South and to comprehend them in their interaction with developments in the Global North.”

Dr. Oliver Tappe, Ethnohistorian

“My research work benefits especially from the thematic focus of our research area, because I do not face any of the geographic restrictions that usually apply in area studies. So while my ethnographic research always has a spatial reference, I can thus directly profit from exchange with research on other world regions.”

Dr. Tobias Schwarz, Ethnologist

“The coffee you drink, the jeans you wear, the mobile phone you use have all come a long way. Accordingly they have an impact on the lives of the people who harvested, mined or produced them at the other end of the world. At GSSC we therefore consider it vital to study how our consumption patterns shape and affect the lives of these people.”

Dr. Tijo Salverda, Ethnologist

The Global South Studies Center (GSSC) aims to investigate and highlight possible causes and consequences of these processes of change.
The Global South Studies Center (GSSC) Cologne

The Global South Studies Center (GSSC) Cologne was established at the University of Cologne in 2014 as part of the German Federal and Länder Excellence Initiative. The member scientists conduct research into social, economic, political and cultural change in the countries of the Global South, aiming to shed light on such developments and advance new options for addressing current and future global challenges.

GSSC brings together research expertise within the University of Cologne in relation to Africa, Asia and Latin America and promotes interdisciplinary cooperation with leading researchers in Germany and abroad. Disciplines linked into the network include Geography, Ethnology, History, Sociolinguistics, Media Sciences, Regional Studies, Latin American History, Romance Philology, Islamic Studies, Modern Chinese Studies and African Studies.

A key focus of GSSC consists of close cooperation with partners from countries of the Global South to promote science-based, interdisciplinary projects targeting the world’s politically and economically marginalised nations. GSSC regards itself as an incubator for innovative joint research projects and a supporting academic environment for junior researchers.

GSSC Research Profile

FOUR INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AREAS ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH

CITIZENSHIP AND MIGRATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

In today’s highly mobile world, migration and citizenship regimes defined by nation states play a vital part in shaping social and political participation for a growing slice of the population. This research area investigates the mechanisms by which migrants are granted or refused access to citizens’ rights.

In this context, researchers are interested in the roles of political and ideological considerations, of the practices of local bureaucracies and of migrants’ own strategies, and how far such factors mutually influence each other.

FROM SLAVE TO COOLIE. MIGRATIONS, WORK AND COOLIE CULTURES

Slavery was gradually abolished worldwide beginning in the late 18th century. Yet conditions of dependency and forms of employment that very much resemble slavery persist in many regions of the world to this day, with severe implications for those affected. Examples include the many millions of migrant labourers and day labourers, sometimes known as coolies, living in dire insecurity in countries of the Global South.

The research area investigates slavery, forced and contract labour from 1850 to the present as well as the associated migration dynamics and transcultural processes.

NATURAL COMMODITIES AND CHANGING MARKETS IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The cultivation, production and sale of foodstuffs, medicinal substances and other natural products have been globally interconnected for centuries. Globalisation in this sector has long gone hand in hand with land-grabbing, price speculation and environmental change wherever the products come from. This continues to have severe implications, most of all for poor population segments who often suffer from massive impacts on their ways of life and on their health.

Focusing on the period from the late 18th century to the present, the research team investigates how global flows of natural commodities affect societies, the environment and power relations.

COMMUNICATIVE REPERTOIRES IN THE TRANSFORMING GLOBAL SOUTH

It is through communication that transformation processes in the Global South reach broader awareness and come to notice. Individuals and social groups make use of communicative repertoires, including diverse forms of verbal and non-verbal communication together with communication instruments such as digital media. Communicative repertoires are construed as forms of social and symbolic capital and as such are an integral part of economic relationships and social networks.

The research area investigates the transformation of communicative practices and the associated symbolic capital in order to shed light on changing power relations and how they are negotiated in everyday life.

Notebook: d3 images - Fotolia.com

“Working together with colleagues from African Studies, Linguistics and Ethnology under the GSSC umbrella allows me to discuss the phenomena I observe in South-East Asia in a comparative setting. Furthermore synergies emerge through the exchange of theories and methods with other disciplines.”

Prof. Dr. Sandra Kurfürst, South-East Asia Researcher