

HIGHER EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH GROUP 'WELL-BEING, AGENCY, AND SOCIO-ECO JUSTICE'

Focus

As SARCHI Chair, Prof Melanie Walker leads theoretically driven and empirically rich research, focusing on human development in the space of higher education.

Human development's broad goals include to live a healthy and creative life; to be knowledgeable; and to have access to the material and non-material resources needed for a dignified life with many valuable capabilities (freedoms to be and to do) and functionings (achieved beings and doings).

Our research therefore investigates how higher education policies, processes, practices, and values contribute to our understanding of the conditions of possibility for human development, capabilities formation, and for redressable injustices in and through higher education. We consider how the reproductive effects of higher education can be interrupted across spaces of classroom, campus, and community in the direction of well-being, agency, and eco-social justice.

We are also interested in participatory approaches to research – such as digital storytelling and photovoice – for their potential to mobilise agency, a plurality of perspectives and knowledges, and to advance the repair of historical injustices.

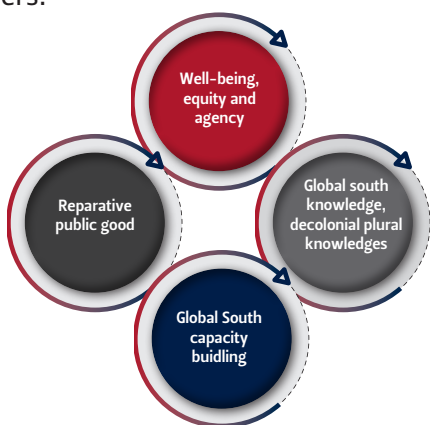
Our research is aligned with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 4 'Quality Education', linking our work to global development conversations.

Aims

1. To investigate opportunities, structures, and inequalities in and through higher education, and how, or if, the relationship between higher education and society advances repair of past injustices, human dignity, and eco-social justice.
2. To generate knowledge that addresses inequalities and contributes to educational, ecological, and social change and capabilities formation for individuals, universities, and communities.

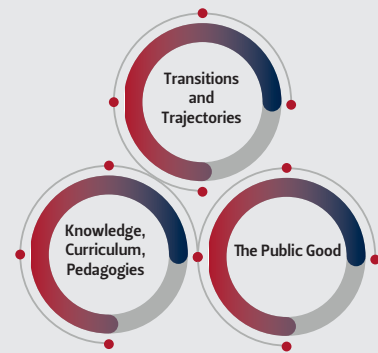
Objectives

- To understand the contextual conditions of possibility for well-being (capabilities expansion) and relational agency in and through higher education.
- To conceptualise and understand how higher education is or might be a 'reparative public good'.
- To generate Global South conceptual frames and scholarship in and for higher education research.
- To build capacity among Global South early-career researchers.



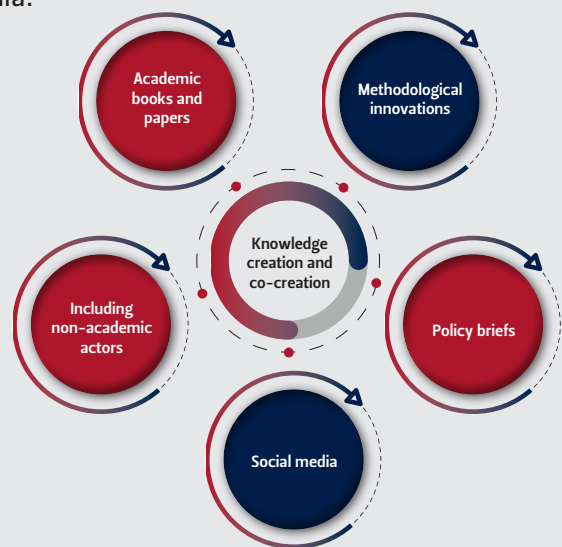
Eco-Social Justice Research themes

Under the broad umbrella of eco-social justice, there are three intersecting, multi-dimensional themes informing research under the chair.



Knowledge generation activities

Our activities include books, articles, conference papers, policy briefs, webinars, participatory research, and social media.



Contact us

For more information on our research and opportunities to work with us, please contact Prof Melanie Walker at walkermj@ufs.ac.za

i Human development grew out of global discussions on the links between economic growth and development during the second half of the 20th Century. By the early 1960s, there were increasing calls to challenge GDP: economic growth had emerged as both a leading objective, and indicator, of national progress. In the 1970s and 80s, development debates considered going beyond GDP, including the basic needs approach. These ideas helped pave the way for the human development approach, which is about expanding the richness of human life, rather than simply the richness of the economy in which human beings live. It is an approach that is focused on creating fair opportunities and choices for all people to improve the actual lives they lead and value, rather than assuming that economic growth will lead, automatically, to greater opportunities for all.

ii SDGs: 1: No Poverty; 2: Zero Hunger; 3: Good Health and Well-being; 4: Quality Education; 5: Gender Equality; 6: Clean Water and Sanitation; 7: Affordable and Clean Energy; 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth; 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; 10: Reduced Inequalities; 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; 12: Responsible Consumption and Production; 13: Climate Action; 14: Life Below Water; 15: Life on Land; 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions; 17: Partnerships for the Goals.