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Decolonization of academia and organizational work from the standpoint of the solidarity organization

Čoahkkáigeassu/ abstrákta:

This presentation examines efforts to initiate the decolonization of academia and organizational work from the standpoint of the solidarity organization Students and Academics International Helpfund (SAIH).

In 2018, SAIH adopted a resolution calling for the decolonization of academia, inspired by partnerships with Indigenous communities in the Global South and movements such as #RhodesMustFall. The initiative triggered polarized public debate and significant pushback, reflecting longstanding sanctioned ignorance of coloniality in Norwegian society and higher education. The resolution sought to stimulate dialogue and action to confront colonial and racist legacies, challenge the presumed universality of Western modern knowledge, and create space for Indigenous perspectives and marginalized epistemologies. We argue that decolonizing efforts are essential for social justice, academic freedom and democratic culture, as well as for enhancing the quality and breadth of research and education.

A key outcome was the publication of a collaboratively authored toolkit on decolonizing academia in 2020, including contributions from Sámi scholars and students. In 2025, SAIH adopted a new five-year strategy with a clear decolonial foundation, establishing a working group to develop shared understandings and practices of decolonization. The group aims to strengthen the visibility and integration of Sámi perspectives internally, within Norwegian academia, and in international collaborations.

This presentation shares experiences from facilitating decolonial dialogue, advancing organizational practices, and revising the toolkit in light of recent developments, including the 2023 Truth and Reconciliation Report. It further highlights key lessons learned and invites participants to engage in dialogue on future steps towards decolonization of the academia.