

## **09/11/2023 - Heike Winschiers-Theophilus & Liesbeth Huybrechts**

**Title:** Envisioning socially inclusive potential futures

**Part 1 subtitle:** Leveraging digital technologies to promote social inclusion: A Southern African perspective

### **Abstract**

Digital transformation is considered to play a significant role in the achievement of the UN sustainability development goals (SDG) by 2030. While digital transformation has the potential to challenge inequalities and provide access to information, education, health system and other resources to previously excluded it can also be counterproductive and widen the gap between the have and have nots. In this presentation we draw on our collaborations with Namibian indigenous communities in which we have been co-designing digital technologies to promote social equity and envisioned alternative futures. Current technologies, such as social media, can be used to amplify indigenous voices, however all digital technologies encompass a systemic bias propagating a western way of life and seeing the world. In line with current decolonisation movements such as the decolonisation of education in South Africa, we maintain that marginalised groups ought to participate in technology design to shift underlying values systems and potentially create socially inclusive futures. For example, futuring sessions with indigenous communities in Namibia have revealed fused futures consisting of traditional values and practices with emerging technologies. Considering the diversity of people and communities across the globe potential and desirable futures can take on many forms thus we are promoting pluriversality, whereby many worlds can co-exist in different variations of interdependencies.

**Part2 subtitle:** Leveraging (digital) technologies to promote social inclusion in European and African diverse contexts

### **Abstract**

This lecture discusses the role (digital) technologies can play in addressing socio-environmental challenges in diverse urban, suburban and rural settings in vulnerable times. We particularly discuss their role in facilitating participatory processes between institutions and everyday actors, while insuring “just” transitions. We question how institutions, because of their vulnerable positions often adopt a consensus model in decision-making on socio-ecological transitions such as dealing with water, sustainable mobility or energy, preferring a cognitive exchange on experiences of the daily environment in transition. We argue that this model excludes many actors, such as people who do not master the language, who are verbally less expressive, or who literally do not have a voice, such as plants and animals. We demonstrate how we have explored an exchange focusing also on more bodily experiences of the environment supports a more just transition between institutions and a more pluriverse set of everyday actors. To illustrate this, we present two case studies, experimenting with a hybrid set of and physical tools, that aim to enable a bodily exchange of experiences of how actors care for and act on socio-environmental challenges in both European and African (Tanzanian) contexts. We debate how the use of these tools enabled achieving this aim and how - unwanted - the process still produced inequalities between everyday actors and institutions. We will end with

some learnings on how designing with and for more bodily experiences in participatory processes addressing socio-environmental challenges.