

# Decolonising Fire Science: An Introduction Workshop



LEVERHULME

Centre for **Wildfires,**  
**Environment and Society**

Tues 5<sup>th</sup> April, 14:00-16:30 GMT+1

**HYBRID: Grantham Institute Boardroom, Imperial College London  
& MS Teams Virtual Meeting**

This Decolonising Fire Science workshop will introduce evolving decolonisation conversations regarding scientific research and methodologies, acknowledging that research is a political act and the way in which we exercise and communicate knowledge is deeply embedded in global power dynamics. Together, we will discuss ways in which fire is regarded as a highly politicised resource, yet its management has become depoliticised, impeding epistemological freedom and silencing ‘other’ knowledges in scientific research and, therefore, in decision-making processes.

This workshop aims to create a space for us to think about how epistemic freedom can be promoted in academic and research institutions, and how to communicate knowledge that transcends ontological assumptions. This includes thinking about our positionality as a researcher, the purpose of our research enquiry, the theory and assumptions that frame our research question and approach, who we define an ‘expert’, who we are researching for, who we are *not* reading or whose voices we *cannot* hear, how and where we communicate our research and the impacts this has on dominant power and knowledge hierarchies, and the ways in which our research impacts the peoples and places we are researching—from whom and where we are often geographically and epistemologically divergent. *How can we share knowledge systems across space and time in scientific research?*

*This workshop is brought to you by the [Leverhulme Wildfires EDI Working Group](#)*

## Agenda

*Please arrive or sign in a few minutes early to allow for a prompt start*

**14:00- 14:10** Introduction – Abigail Croker & Adriana Ford (ICL)

**14:10- 14:55** Decolonisation – Scientific Research and Knowledge Production

Overview of evolving decolonisation conversations, key ideas and questions, and research applications:

**Siseko Kumalo** (University of Fort Hare and University of Pretoria)

**Mireille Kouyo** (KCL and University of Pretoria)

**14:55- 15:05 -----Break-----**

**15:05- 15:35 Decolonising Fire Science – Physical and Social Fire Sciences**

Exploration into decolonising fire science and research, questioning what it means, why it is important, and how it can be addressed in physical, social, and transdisciplinary fire research:

**Professor Jay Mistry** (RHUL) – Ways of listening

**Dr Cathy Smith** (RHUL) - Understanding the historical context

**Kapil Yadav** (KCL) – Reflexivity and Positionality as Gateways to Decolonising Research Design

**15:35-16:10 Mapping Centre Strategies**

Brainstorm:

- What is the need for decolonising fire science – physical and social?
- How can ideas of decolonisation be incorporated into fire science research?
- How do ideas of decolonisation impact your research approaches, methodologies, and communications?
- What are the opportunities for and challenges of decolonising fire science in an institutional setting?
- How can we approach decolonisation in the Centre?

**16:10- 16:30 General Discussion of Maps**

- Reports from each group and general discussion - **how can physical and social fire scientists work together to progress on decolonising fire research?**

**16:30 End**