In Memory of Cornelia Staritz

(jointly written by students and colleagues)

We are deeply sad that Cornelia – Neli – Staritz, professor of development economics at our department, passed away on July 3rd after repeated battles with a severe illness. We have lost a brilliant, committed, and supportive colleague, mentor, teacher and friend.

Before Neli began her professorship at the Department of Development Studies in 2018, she was among the first to teach in and thus shape development studies ("Internationale Entwicklung" or "ie" for short) – a student-led initiative at the University of Vienna. Neli led introductory seminars on development economics since 2004 and continuously expanded a team of colleagues around her. Beyond teaching and activist work with attac, she was also involved in the "IE struggles", that is, the institutionalisation of development studies, born out of a history of engaged research and teaching and based on continuous solidarity between students and staff. We fondly remember her "Where can I help?"-phone calls during this period. After finishing two doctoral degrees (at the New School for Social Research in New York City in 2008 and the Vienna University in Business and Economics in 2011) and working for the World Bank (2008-2010), Neli returned to teaching in development studies in 2015, while working for the Austrian Foundation for Development Research (2011-2018). In 2018, despite her first struggle with illness and coming out of maternity leave, she won a tenure track professorship at the department, after presenting her future visions and plans for research and teaching in development economics in the most dedicated, motivated and passionate way.

Neli's research interests were wide-ranging, and she made numerous novel contributions on global value chains, international trade and financial systems. A central concern of her research was understanding power asymmetries, distributional struggles and inequality in an ever-changing global political economy. Her work was fuelled by a deep-felt commitment towards just value chains characterized by fair prices, living wages, decent work, and shared responsibility for sustainability. Three areas were of particular interest to her:
First, Neli studied processes of structural transformation, especially the opportunities but also the challenges and risks faced by governments, workers and local firms that integrate into global value chains dominated by multinational corporations. In this area, Neli authored numerous publications on the garment export industries in Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mauritius, and Madagascar.
A second theme of her research were labour regimes and labour struggles in global production. A key interest of Neli was to understand how labour governance but also workers' struggle for better wages, working conditions and labour rights unfold within

state-capital-labour relations at national and global scale.
A third central interest of hers was studying the impact of financial markets and financial actors on socio-economic systems, also termed as 'financialization'. Neli was particularly interested in tracing the power struggles around the price-setting in global commodities markets, and how global financial derivatives markets impact local prices in agriculture and mineral sectors. She also critically examined the emerging landscape of green finance, highlighting the risks that new financial instruments and climate-related conditionality could exacerbate existing global inequalities and debt burdens.
In all these research fields, Neli combined an encyclopaedic knowledge of different literatures with relentless fieldwork in several countries, interviewing labour unions, manufacturing and trading firms, government officials and financial market actors.
Neli's work was driven by her sheer insatiable investigative spirit and curiosity which extended well beyond her core research areas. She led and was part of numerous research projects. Beyond her academic ambition and rigor in these projects, she set an example in understanding research as a collective endeavour, placing solidarity, a sense of community and support for peer and early-career researchers at the centre of all collaborations. Neli uniquely combined academic depth and dedication with a spirit of solidarity and critical thinking.

The passion that Neli brought to her research topics was just as tangible for her students in her teaching. Despite her numerous commitments and battle with illness, Neli was a dedicated teacher who made time for her students until the very last moment. Her teaching was built on the premise that students were interested, engaged and competent, and it was these qualities that she evoked in them. Her courses were characterised by a high level of interaction, variety, and expectations, which resulted from both her expertise and confidence in her students' abilities. As a student, you could be sure that your work would be taken seriously and that you would receive thoughtful and constructive feedback on it. It was evident that she placed a high degree of trust in her students and was deeply committed to their development.

With much passion and commitment, Neli also shaped the new transdisciplinary Vienna Doctoral School of Social Sciences and with it, successive generations of doctoral students, beyond her own team at the department. She also supervised and inspired countless Master's students with equal commitment. When discussing their thesis, many students benefited greatly from Neli's numerous and helpful suggestions, ideas and criticism. We will miss her support, pragmatic optimism and infectious enthusiasm. In her official role as mentor, but also well beyond that, we remember Neli as someone who was very supportive of and concerned for colleagues, offering assistance, checking in, and making newcomers feel welcome.

Outside of work, we fondly remember Neli's enthusiasm for joint activities and amazing desserts: The Mohnnudeln in Raabs an der Thaya captivated her just as much as the Milchrahmstrudel at the Heurige. We got to know Neli as an incredibly strong, fast-

paced, sharp, cheerful, passionate, and supportive colleague, mentor and teacher. She lives on as an inspiration to many of us. As a department, we seek to honour her intellectual rigour, her passion for transdisciplinary research, teaching and supervision on global inequalities, and her collegial solidarity. Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to her partner Leon, her children Adrian and Susa, and the entire family.

Memorial Space Forevermissed

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