Progressive development economics in an era of geopolitics, affordability crisis and climate change

Celebrating the academic legacy of Cornelia Staritz

Date: June 25 – 26, 2026

Location: Alois Wagner Saal, C3 – Centrum für Internationale Entwicklung, Sensengasse 3, 1090 Vienna. https://www.centrum3.at/das-c3/das-c3-besuchen-informationen-zu-oeffnungszeiten-und-standort/

Organizing institutions:

- Austrian Foundation for Development Research (ÖFSE)
- Department of Development Studies (IE), University of Vienna
- Vienna Doctoral School of Social Sciences (ViDSS), University of Vienna
- Resilience and Malleability of Social Metabolism (REMASS)
- Arbeiterkammer Wien
- Kompetenzzentrum Alltagsökonomie

Organizing team:

- Emma Dowling, Annina Kaltenbrunner, Karin Küblböck, Felix Maile, Leonhard Plank, Miriam Rehm, Matthias Schnetzer, Bernhard Tröster, Aleksandra Wojewska

Please register for the event via a short mail to: studienassistenz.ie@univie.ac.at

This symposium celebrates the academic legacy of Cornelia Staritz (1980-2025). It engages with Cornelia's major conceptual, methodological, and empirical contributions in the field of (heterodox) development economics. Throughout the past 25 years, Cornelia explored global power structures and agency in an ever-changing global political economy. As part of her prolific collaborations with institutions, scholars, and activists in Vienna and beyond, Cornelia sought to trace and explain uneven and combined development trajectories in the global economy, analyzing power relations and distributional struggles between firms, workers, and governments within and across different countries.

Her work combined theories in political economy, economic sociology and economic geography and methods ranging from in-depth fieldwork across more than 15 countries and quantitative data on trade flows, prices, and financial markets, and she connected conceptual thinking about the major macro processes of our time, such as

globalized trade and financial markets, with fine-grained analyses of firms and workers and lived realities across different places. Lastly, Cornelia's work connected academic insights to broader activist, societal and policy debates about (progressive) economic policy strategies.

Such an approach is more timely than ever in order to capture, navigate and respond to the complexities of our time: As the global financial, economic, and political order is becoming more complex and potentially more fragmented, international cooperation seems to be unable to combat conflicts, poverty and inequality, climate crisis and resource extractivism. Geopolitical tensions and rivalries are unfolding in global trade and financial systems, and economic and political coercion is becoming the norm to advance geo-strategic aims. While the role of state action is advancing in geo-economic governance, we are observing a simultaneous (neoliberal) restructuring of national economies and welfare states, budget, and aid cuts. Further, price shocks and inflation are fueling distributional inequalities, and eroding affordable access to basic needs and related infrastructures (e.g., housing, energy, food) both in the global North and global South.

By engaging with Cornelia's work and contributions, this symposium seeks to trace the causes, mechanisms, and outcomes of the current shifts in the global financial, economic, and political system, and open the space for thinking about progressive alternatives and pathways for sustainable global development. In doing so, the symposium pursues three aims: (1) Engaging with Cornelia's work and legacy in the spheres of global finance, production, and consumption/resource use (2) creating an interdisciplinary encounter of different concepts, methods and empirical foci that engage with current power structures and agency (3) translating these insights into the pressing contemporary questions and progressive strategies, and concrete policy initiatives.

The symposium begins with a memorial on Cornelia's work and academic legacy, followed by three panels that cover Cornelia's main clusters of work:

(a) Consumption: Climate crisis, extractivism and Provisioning systems.

(b) Production: Global value chains, industrial policy, and labor struggles

(c) Finance: Financialization and global inequality

Thursday, 25 June 2026

Location: Alois Wagner Saal, ÖFSE

15.00-17.00 Opening: The academic legacy of Cornelia Staritz

- Aleksandra Wojewska and Felix Maile on Cornelia at the Department of Development Studies
- Karin Küblböck on Cornelia at ÖFSE
- Karin Fischer on early years at IE and collaboration on “Globale Warenketten und ungleiche Entwicklung”
- Joachim Becker on Cornelia´s formative years at WU
- Emma Dowling (Vice-speaker ViDSS): Cornelia at the Vienna Doctoral School of Social Sciences (ViDSS) and early career support

Followed by an open mic.

18.00 Dinner @Heuriger Obermann

Friday, 26 June 2026

Location: Alois Wagner Saal, ÖFSE

09.00-10.30 Panel 1: Consumption: Climate crisis, extractivism, and provisioning systems

A key process of the 21st century is the surge on consumption and the material impacts driving resource use, emissions levels, and destruction of eco-systems to levels that significantly overshoot planetary boundaries. At the same time, despite globalized supply chain, there is a major gap in addressing basic needs, including housing, food, mobility, and energy, across both rich and poor societies.

In the final years of her academic career, Cornelia sought to integrate concepts from political ecology and provisioning systems, which investigate how modern societies and economies can be organized to address basic human needs while remaining within planetary boundaries. This strand was informed by her existing work on global finance and production, with a specific focus on the necessary raw materials for the provisioning of basic goods and services. As such, the empirically grounded understanding of both global finance and production, and questions about sustainable consumption and raw material use can provide a holistic approach to addressing environmental crises while enabling basic needs.

At the same time, raw materials extraction has been subject to an increased geopolitical turn, while global cooperation on mitigating climate change is not delivering.

This session explores:

- Where is global resource extraction heading to? What is the impact of recent policies such as the ‘Critical Raw Materials’ Act?
- What are viable policy tools and instruments to address the cost-of-living crisis and the provisioning of basic goods and services?
- What are the opportunities and challenges for sustainable provisioning systems across the global North and the global South?

Moderation: Felix Maile

Presenters:

- Helmut Haberl: The Remass Project: Conceptual and methodological aims and Cornelia’s contribution
- Bernhard Tröster: EU policies on critical minerals
- Erika Faigen: Lithium 'seen through' three moments of decision-making: criticality, extractive industries and material innovation
- Luca Calafati: Murky Water: Challenging an unsustainable system

10.30-11.00 Coffee Break

11.00-12.30 Panel 2: Production: Global value chains, industrial policy, and labor struggles

Central to Cornelia's work was the understanding of organizational and geographical disaggregation of production processes, coined as 'global value chains'. The global value chain/production approach analyzes the global economy as a set of power struggles and governance relationships between consumers, (global North-based) 'lead firms' that organize global supply chains, global south suppliers, workers, and governments. Global value chains have been associated with providing opportunities for global South countries, firms, and workers to connect to the global economy access technology, capital, and export markets, but they have also been associated with the dominance of (foreign) multinational corporations and low value capture in global South countries, low wages, precarious working conditions, and workers' rights, as well as resource extractivism and environmental pollution.

Cornelia's work combined comparative work across different industries and countries, emphasizing importance of examining both the global and local power structures that shape the distribution of costs, benefits, and risks in a highly interconnected supply chains, but also the agency of local firms, workers, and governments in adapting to or re-making these structures. The climate crisis, geopolitical tensions and technological change have sparked the debate on an inflection point in globalized production, with expectations for shorter/more regional supply chains looming high. Further, a set of extra-territorial regulation with potential to counter exploitation and environmental destruction in global supply chains emerged over the last decade.

This session discusses:

- In light of geoeconomics, tariffs, technological change and climate crisis and regulatory shifts: How are supply chains changing?
- Where are the pressure points in distributive struggles in trade tensions?
- How are these shifts affecting labor (power) and labor agency?

Moderation: Karin Fischer

Presenters:

- Kristoffer Marslev: Towards a stronger EU approach on the trade-labor nexus? The EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement, social struggles, and labor reforms in Vietnam
- Werner Raza: Geopolitical tensions and EU trade policies
- Richard Bärnthaler: Conjunctural openings for transformative industrial policy and economic planning

12.30-13.30 Lunch Break

13.30-15.00 Panel 3: Finance: Financialization and global inequality

Few other processes have shaped global capitalism in the 21st century more than financialization - broadly understood as an increased impact of financial market actors, instruments, and logics on all areas of the economy and society. It was the great financial crisis in 2008 that has put the uneven distribution of risks, costs, speculative behavior, and short-termism at the forefront of financialization research.

Cornelia made contributions particularly on the financialization of prices and commodities markets, and how the increased influence of financial market price benchmarks, speculation and financial market logics affected local farmers, firms, global South countries in commodities value chains. Cornelia's work conceptualized the seemingly distinct spheres of 'production' and 'finance' as deeply intertwined, in which finance is not a mere intermediary but a highly political and interest driven set of actors, interests, and mechanisms, and linking the highly technical inner working of financial markets to the very political nature of their governance. This way Cornelia analyzed both financial markets and institutions as drivers of inequality through a specific distribution of profits, costs, and risks. As the importance of stock markets, private capital and the 'financialization' of public goods seems to be on an all-time high, the session seeks to discuss both the drivers and mechanisms of financialization in modern society, but also potential pathways towards 'de-financialization'.

This session discusses:

- How has the process of financialization evolved in the past 25 years? What are key actors and processes? What are the limits of this concept?
- What are key beneficiaries and losers of financialization?
- How has financialization affected distribution and access to (basic) services?
- What are progressive alternatives and policy initiatives to address the impacts of financialization?

Moderation: Emma Dowling

Presenters:

- Aleksandra Wojewska and Bernhard Tröster: The financialization of commodity markets and price-setting
- Annina Kaltenbrunner: Unpacking the Global Value Chains – finance nexus
- Felix Maile: Shareholders as the main beneficiaries of globalized production? Corporate financialization and value capture along global value chains

15.00-15.15 Coffee Break

15.15-16.00 Synthesis and closing session

Moderation: Karin Küblböck, Felix Maile

18.00 Public Lecture by Isabella Weber "Economics in a global perspective". In Memoriam Cornelia Staritz

In this lecture Isabella Weber will show the richness of global economic thinking which pre-dates the rise of British political economy in the 18th century, showing an astonishing plurality of approaches to economic development emerging from different socio-cultural and politico-economic contexts. It will link these traditions to current economic development, including price shocks that are fueling inequalities and eroding affordable access to essential goods and services, and how to address them.

Location: VHS Urania, 1010 Wien. https://share.google/f95J02EEENFJ6FpXN

Further information and registration: https://www.karlpolanyisociety.com/polanyi-guest-professorship/general-information/isabella-weber/