



25 años  
Escuela IDAES  
UNSAM

40 AÑOS DE  
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## Indebtedness From Below Sovereign Debt, Human Rights and Day-to Day Life in Argentina

Buenos Aires -10 March 2023

Campus Miguelete, San Martin University- CELS - Escuela IDAES (UNSAM)  
GRIP - Global Research on Inequality Programme (University of Bergen,  
Norway/International Science Council, Paris)

The GRIP global programme on inequality (University of Bergen/International Science Council Paris) and CELS/IDEAS collaborate in a workshop on “Indebtedness from Below” at UNSAM, Buenos Aires.

Among the group of countries affected by the dynamics of international credit and the political programs that are subject to these loans, Argentina stands out as an emblematic case due to its extreme macroeconomic characteristics and the weight that the external debt has on its economy, political culture and system. It is well known that in 2018 Argentina accessed the greatest credit in the history of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The external debt to GDP ratio increased from 52% up to 90% from 2015 to 2019 as a result. The payment of this debt -the amounts, terms and modalities- implies long term constraints on those who make decisions relating to the economic model, to the social protection system and to the regulation of labor relationships, among other critical issues.

The negative remarks on the IMF and about the illegitimacy of the debt have been a recurring trope of critical political and social discourses over the last decades, as has been expressed in slogans such as “Get the IMF out of Latin America” or “The debt must be paid by the powerful”. Variations of this type of demands have been part of political, union and social programs and proposals with varied intensity throughout the 40 years since the return to democracy in 1983. More recently, in a highly organized and mobilized society, social activism have started to analyze from different perspectives and with renewed precision



the effects of the indebtedness processes and the constraints deriving therefrom.

Some organizations of the feminist movement, for instance, report the impact of debt on the inclusion of women in the labor market and in the social protection system. They also point out how the adjustment in public care policies resulted in an overload of the unpaid domestic and reproductive work. They underline these factors among the causes of the feminization of poverty and the huge rise of domestic indebtedness, carried by women. Farmer and peasant organizations and environmental organizations, in turn, report the link between foreign indebtedness and the expansion and deepening of an extractionist development model that expels rural communities from their territories and causes environmental damages, some of these irreversible. Trade Unions and social movements report the impact of constraints set forth in agreements on labor flexibilization, precarization and the reform of pension systems.

Due to the effects that Structural Adjustment Programs and budget cuts in general have on access to fundamental rights such as health, education and care policies in general, international Human Rights protection mechanisms have paid attention and defined principles regarding what States can and cannot do to meet their debt payment obligations. The sovereign indebtedness does not suspend Human Rights obligations or, in other words, the debt can not be paid with social rights.

Academic reflection on the links between sovereign indebtedness and Human Rights has been carried out fundamentally from the fields of economics, economic and legal sociology, and International Human Rights Law. In Argentina, various approaches to political and economic history reconstruct the external debt process in different periods. However, analyzing and understanding the way in which these structural and macroeconomic processes filter into everyday life, into the social and political culture, into public policies at a micro level, into the activism of multiple sectors and finally in the vital horizons of the population, requires a diversification of interdisciplinary approaches and insights.

Between 2021 and 2022, the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS, Argentina), one of the most important Argentinian Human Rights organizations,



and the Interdisciplinary School of Advanced Social Studies (EIDAES) of the National University of San Martín (UNSAM, Argentina), have articulated academic and activist knowledge with respect to the constraints imposed by the IMF on social, economic, and environmental public policies. This line of research focused primarily on the production of a plural narrative -aimed at dissemination and advocacy- about the impact of macroeconomic decisions taken as a result of sovereign indebtedness on the exercise of economic, social, labor and environmental rights. This joint research has been developed within the framework of the project “Sovereign debt and day-to-day life. Activism consolidation upon the effects of indebtedness on the environment, labor and care and protection”.

This collaborative workshop aims to develop further global knowledge on national debt, inequalities, and human rights based on the Argentinian case, facilitate exchanges between researchers, and develop a special section proposal for Focaal - Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology.

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### **Workshop Program**

Friday 10 th March 2023

Campus Miguelete

Universidad de San Martín, Buenos Aires, Argentina

#### **8.45 Welcome coffee and general presentation**

Don Kalb and Ariel Wilkis

#### **9-11 First panel**

*Indebtedness from below. Perspectives about Sovereign debt, Human Rights and day-to day life in Argentina*

Ariel Wilkis and Marcela Perelman

*Argentina and the IMF from the prism of debt cycles and social rights*



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Pablo Nemiña and Alejandro Gaggero

### 11 - 13 Second panel

*Ecological Debt and Development. Discursive coalitions and dispute fronts in Argentina* Gabriela Merlinsky and Facundo Martín

*Effects of sovereign debt on the right to adequate housing and a healthy environment. An analysis of the role of the Judiciary in the Matanza-Riachuelo case*

Julieta Rossi and Leonel Bazán

### 13 - 14 Lunch break

### 14-16 Third panel

*From default crisis to eviction risk: daily life and housing under the lenses of sovereign debt and private debt in Buenos Aires tenant households*

Ma. Florencia Labiano, Luna Miguens and Leandro Vera Belli

*Beware the debt: the impact of adjustment on public care and social protection policies in Argentina*

Corina Enriquez, Florencia Partenio, Vanina Escales, Daiana Aizenberg and Michelle Cañas

### 16 - 17 Open discussion and next steps

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### Participants:

**Don Kalb:** Academic Director of GRIP, University of Bergen/International Science Council, Paris; Professor of social anthropology, University of Bergen. Editor at large, Focaal – Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology. Recent books: *Anthropologies of Class* (ed. With James Carrier, Cambridge U.P, 2015; Worldwide



Mobilizations (ed. With Mao Mollona, Berghahn Books, 2018; Financialization: Relational Approaches (ed. With Chris Hann, Berghahn Books, 2020).

**Ariel Wilkis:** PhD in Sociology (EHES, Paris). Researcher at CONICET (Argentina) and full professor at Universidad de San Martín. Dean in Escuela IDEAS (Universidad de San Martín). Author of *The Moral Power of Money* (Stanford UP, 2017) and *Las sospechas del dinero* (Paidós, 2013) and *Dollar: How the U.S. Dollar Became a Popular Currency in Argentina -1930-2019-* (University of New Mexico Press, 2023)

**Marcela Perelman:** PhD in Social Sciences (University of Buenos Aires). Director of the Research Area at the Center for the Legal and Social Studies (CELS, Argentina). Professor for the Urban Sociology lectureship of the UBA's Sociology department and in the PhD on Human Rights of the University of Lanús (UNLA). Academic co-coordinator of the Higher Diploma in Human Rights: Conflicts, Politics and Activism (Clacso-CELS). Among its main subjects are the intersections between academic research and human rights activism, as well as the intersection with issues that have not traditionally been addressed in the human rights agenda.

**Pablo Nemiña:** PhD in Social Sciences and BA in Sociology, both at the University of Buenos Aires. Adjunct Researcher of the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research, based at National University of San Martín (UNSAM). Associate Researcher of the Department of International Relations at FLACSO - Argentina. Undergraduate and graduate professor at the National University of San Martín, FLACSO - Argentina and the University of Buenos Aires. His research agenda is organized around the IMF's role in global finances, the relations between IFIs and developing countries, and the Political Economy of Global Financial Governance.

**Alejandro Gaggero:** PhD in Social Sciences and BA in Sociology, both at the University of Buenos Aires. Adjunct Researcher of the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research, based at National University of San Martín (UNSAM). Undergraduate and graduate professor at the National University of San Martín, the University of Buenos Aires and the National University of



Quilmes. His primary research interests are in the fields of economic sociology and political economy.

**Gabriela Merlinsky:** Full Professor at University of Buenos Aires, and Researcher for the National Council for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICET), Argentina.

**Facundo Martín:** Associate Professor at the Department of Geography, National University of Cuyo and Researcher for the National Council for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICET), Argentina

**Julieta Rossi:** Lawyer, Director and professor at the Human Rights Master's Program at the National University of Lanus and professor at the School of Law and the Human Right's Masters Program at the University of Buenos Aires and at the National University of General San Martín. Member elected to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the period 2023-2026.

**Leonel Bazán:** Lawyer, Magister (in process) at the Master's Program, National University of Lanus Director, member of the social organization Centro para una Justicia Igualitaria y Popular - CEJIP.

**Ma. Florencia Labiano:** (EIDAES-UNSAM/CONICET). Sociologist and PhD candidate at the National University of San Martín (Argentina) and since 2018, scholarship holder by the National Council of Scientific and Technical Research. Her dissertation project deals with inequality, real estate wealth accumulation process and rental market in the City of Buenos Aires. She participates in several research projects about financial oikonomization, domestic indebtedness and rental vulnerability.

**Luna Miguens:** CELS. Political scientist and Coordinator of "Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" area at the Center for Legal and Social Studies. She is particularly interested in the problem of housing and land access in the city and the countryside.



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**Leandro Vera Belli:** CELS. Sociologist at the University of Buenos Aires and Master in Urban Economics from the Torcuato di Tella University. Since 2015, researcher in the area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the Center for Legal and Social Studies, Argentina

**Corina Rodríguez Enríquez:** Feminist economist, graduate of the University of Buenos Aires; Master in Public Policy from the Institute of Social Studies (The Hague, The Netherlands) and PhD in Social Sciences from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO). Researcher at the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research (Conicet) at the Interdisciplinary Centre for the Study of Public Policy (CIEPP). Co-director of the PhD in Political Economy (EIDAES-UNSAM).

**Florencia Partenio:** PhD in Social Sciences (UBA). Member of the Executive Committee of the Global South Feminist Network DAWN. Teacher-researcher at EIDAES-UNSAM.

**Vanina Escales:** Journalist and essayist, she coordinates the transversal work of CELS for the intersectional feminist approach to human rights. She is a PhD student in Social Sciences (UBA).

**Daiana Aizenberg:** Works at CELS on the intersectional feminist approach to human rights, researcher in urban studies and gender studies (ICO-UNGS and FADU-UBA). PhD candidate in Social Anthropology (IDAES-UNSAM).

**Michelle Cañas Comas:** Has a degree in International Studies from Torcuato Di Tella University and is a researcher at CELS in the area of Economic and Social Rights.

#### **Support:**

CELS (Argentina)

EIDAES-UNSAM (Argentina)

GRIP - Global Research Programme on Inequality (University of Bergen/ISC Paris)



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