

Decolonizing  
*Curricula*  
Pluralizing  
*Teaching and*  
*Research*  
Postcolonial  
*Perspectives*  
on Universities  
in the 21st  
Century

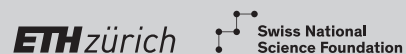
VENUE & CONTACT

ETH Zürich, Room HG F 5, Rämistrasse 101, CH-8006 Zürich  
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ORGANISERS

Monique Ligtenberg and Harald Fischer-Tiné (History of the Modern World, ETH Zürich), Philipp Krauer (Staatsarchiv Schwyz).

PARTNER



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Conference

### *Description*

During the past decade, public debates about the legacies of imperialism and colonialism in Western countries have reached a new level of intensity not least to the attention generated by the Black Lives Matter movement. Since 2019, the discussion has also entered public debates in countries such as Switzerland that long prided themselves of not being involved in atrocities. The insight that imperialism and colonialism were often pan-European rather than strictly national enterprises is slowly gaining currency. For example, there have been fierce controversies about the fate of statues of Swiss merchants and philanthropists involved in the slave trade. Other widely mediated disputes have concerned the restitution of objects of art from formerly colonised countries in western museums and the erasure of the n\*-word from street names or buildings.

Meanwhile, very few social commentators have so far addressed a phenomenon that is well established in academic circles: the effects of imperial worldviews and various forms of colonial knowledge production that continues to shape universities. Disciplines ranging from anthropology to comparative philology possess a genealogy that is intricately enmeshed in the history of European expansion and the production of colonial power/knowledge. Medicine and “open air sciences” such as geography, geology, botany, or zoology were particularly vital for the success of colonial conquest and exploitation. As a result, the collections of minerals, plant and animal specimens, or fossils that were brought back to Europe from colonial expeditions have been used by generations of lecturers and students in western universities, often without the latter being aware of their sinister past.

If we apply a global perspective, it becomes obvious that the “amnesia” concerning the colonial entanglements of universities often goes hand in hand with other structural legacies of an imperial world built on fundamentally asymmetrical power relations between the “West and the Rest”. Prestige, visibility, and access to generous research funding are highly unequally distributed and concentrated disproportionately in western countries. Ironically, the path to an academic career hence often leads young researchers from the Global South to the old imperial centres of scientific excellence in Europe that had formerly trained colonial administrators.

Alongside this, it is hard to understand why more than half a century after the end of the main wave of decolonisation in Asia and Africa leading academic journals and university presses remain overwhelmingly attached to Euro-American institutions. Finally, particularly in continental European universities yet another irritating phenomenon can be observed: Whilst, due to both large-scale migration and increased student mobility, the student bodies have grown more and more multi-ethnic and diverse in the past decades, the faculty frequently continues to be predominantly white, mono-cultural and male.

The conference “Decolonizing Curricula, Pluralizing Teaching and Research” aims to provide a platform for an urgently needed debate on how universities can make use of postcolonial insights and perspectives to face the challenges of teaching and researching in the 21st century and become more open and diverse institutions, operating in a spirit of historical awareness, equality, and cosmopolitanism. Scholars and experts from around the world and local Swiss researchers, activists, and politicians will share their experience and knowledge and exchange opinions about the appropriate steps to take.

### ***February 2: Historical Perspectives – Colonial Entanglements across Regions and Disciplines***

10:15 – 10:45	Arrival of participants & welcome coffee
10:45 – 11:00	Welcome & introduction by Monique Ligtenberg, Philipp Krauer & Harald Fischer-Tiné
11:00 – 12:45	<b>Panel 1</b> Moderation: Martin Dusinberre (University of Zurich)  Anne Kwaschik (University of Konstanz) The ‘Colonial Moment’ in the History of Sociologies  Monique Ligtenberg (ETH Zurich) Of Tigers and Men: Colonial Collecting and the Swiss Bourgeoisie  Serge Reubi (Centre Alexandre-Koyré, Aubervilliers) Producing knowledge and imposing norms: The shared practices, actors and institutions of sciences and empires
12:45 – 14:15	Lunch Break
14:15 – 16:00	<b>Panel 2</b> Moderation: Gesine Krüger (University of Zurich)  Mona Bieling (Rachel Carson Center, LMU Munich) Hebrew University Jerusalem’s Botanical Garden and its Colonial Entanglements (1920s-1940s)  Tomás Bartoletti (European University Institute, Florence) Insect Collections and the History of Capitalism: Economic Entomology in Plantations ca. 1890-1930  Philipp Krauer & Stephanie Willi (Staatsarchiv Schwyz/ETH Archive) A repository of colonial knowledge: Decolonizing the ETH Archives and its globally entangled collections
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee Break
16:30 – 17:15	<b>Keynote Lecture</b> Suman Seth (Cornell University): Postcolonial and Indigenous Science Studies: Dialogues and Differences

***February 3: Structural Legacies – Contemporary Global Inequality  
in Education & Research***

- 09:00 – 10:30 Poster Presentations by the MAS Development and Cooperation  
Decolonizing Aid
- 10:30 – 11:00 Coffee Break // Film Screening “Restitute Objects – Ancestors Return”  
Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v16gwW15ZVc>
- 11.00 – 12.30 **Roundtable Diversity in Faculty**  
Moderation: Ana Sobral (Postcolonial Spectacles)
- Debjani Bhattacharyya (University of Zurich):  
Whose university is it, anyways?
- Danielle Isler (University of Bayreuth):  
When Doing Nothing Is Tiring - Trying to Challenge Colonial Legacies while  
Trying to Live and Heal
- Michèle Amacker (University of Bern)  
Experiences and studies on diversity measures at universities in Switzerland  
and other European countries
- 12:30 – 13:30 Lunch Break
- 13:30 – 15:00 **Roundtable Museums & Restitution**  
Moderation: Anja Laukötter (Jena University)
- Annette Bhagwati, (Rietberg Museum Zurich)  
"Provincializing" art history: new approaches and curatorial strategies at the  
Museum Rietberg
- Mareile Flitsch (Ethnographic Museum Zurich)  
Skillling for dialogue - Some remarks from social anthropology on decolonizing  
curricula
- Vitjitua Ndjiharine (Dekoloniale Berlin)  
The Schinz Collection at the Ethnographic Museum Zurich
- Ibou Diop (HU Berlin/Stadtmuseum Berlin)  
Restitution: Ethics of a relationship
- 15:00 – 15:15 Coffee Break // Film Screening “Restitute Objects – Ancestors Return”  
Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v16gwW15ZVc>

- 15:15 – 16:45 **Roundtable Decolonizing Curricula**  
Moderation: Olivia Killias (University of Zurich)
- Robert Kramm (Munich Centre for Global History, LMU Munich)  
Radical History: Old and New Perspectives in Research and Teaching
- Shose Kessi (Cape Town University)  
Decolonial curriculum reform: the UCT experience.
- Munir Fasheh (Arab Education Forum/JOHUD)  
The challenge at the roots is to reclaim what has been made invisible
- 17:00 – 17:45 **Keynote Lecture**  
Clémentine Deliss (University of Cambridge/KW Institute for  
Contemporary Art Berlin)  
The Enquiring Eye: contentious collections and their remediation
- 19:00 Conference dinner (invited guests only)  
Restaurant Limmathof, Limmatstrasse 217, 8005 Zürich

***February 4: Dismantling Colonial Legacies – Searching Solutions  
beyond Academia***

- 09:30 – 12:30 Guided Tour: Colonial Legacies in the City of Zurich  
Registration: [info@zh-kolonial.ch](mailto:info@zh-kolonial.ch)
- 14:00 – 16:00 **Roundtable: Demontage des kolonialen Erbes - Dekolonisierung  
jenseits der Akademie** (in German)  
Moderation: Adam Fehr (SRF 4)
- Georg Kreis (Prof. em. Universität Basel)  
Hannan Salamat (ZIID Zürcher Institut für interreligiösen Dialog)  
Jovita dos Santos Pinto (Universität Bern, Histnoire.ch)  
Dembah Fofanah (VoDa.)  
Corine Mauch (Stadtpräsidentin Zürich)