

Decolonial Processes in Swiss Academia, TSANTSA Dossier 24/2019

Deadline: Dec 15, 2017

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Decolonial Processes in Swiss Academia and Cultural Institutions: Empirical and Theoretical Approaches

Call for papers for the TSANTSA Dossier no. 24/2019, ed. Fiona Siegenthaler and Marie-laure Allain Bonilla

Because Switzerland has never been a colonial power, there is a general assumption in public discourse – and tacitly even in some academic fields – that it had nothing to do with colonialism and that there is no need to assess its colonial legacy (see e.g. Purtschert 2012). Likewise, decolonization is perceived as a historical and political moment that involved only the empires and their colonies and ended with the territorial independence of the latter. However, scholars like Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2003), Ramón Grosfoguel (2007) or Walter D. Mignolo (Mignolo/Escobar 2010) have argued that decolonization goes beyond these historic events and involves a fundamental critique of dominant epistemologies originating from Eurocentric and colonial ideologies.

Switzerland, with its powerful institutions of knowledge production, is only starting to realize the scope of this call for decolonization. Some research projects, conferences and public plenary discussions have recently taken up the topic and tried to assess the relevance, feasibility and difficulties of a decolonial approach to archives, collections and higher education systems. This move invites us to reconsider the global connections, markets and power networks that have made ethnographic and other collections possible. It also brings into light the contemporary participation of Swiss institutions in research trends, discourses and cultural economies globally.

Decolonization remains a challenge in Swiss academia as well as in related cultural and educational institutions. What exactly does decolonization mean and how does it apply to the ways how knowledge is generated and preserved in museums, archives and universities? This question addresses both theoretical and empirical issues. On the one hand, it points to the need for a more profound and critical engagement with the various concepts and theories of decolonization and their relevance for the Swiss context. What exactly needs to be decolonized? What would it mean for institutions and their audiences? How can international decolonial theories support this process and how are Swiss specificities taken into consideration? On the other hand, it asks how such a decolonial process can take place in practice and what are the implications for the structure, organization, employment policy, education programs, funding, cultural politics and even for the *raison d'être* of our educational and cultural institutions. How can curators, artists, archivists and scholars respond to the call for plural epistemologies in practice? Can institutions like museums or universities become platforms to interrogate or even change our epistemological founda-

tions, and how?

This CFP for the Tsantsa dossier Decolonial Processes in Swiss Academia and Cultural Institutions: Empirical and Theoretical Approaches invites contributions by scholars and practitioners from disciplines including but not limited to social anthropology, cultural studies, art history, museology, artistic research and history, that critically reflect the role Swiss institutions can play in these decolonial discourses and processes. Perspectives informed by experience in both, Swiss and international research and/or practice contexts are particularly welcome.

Please send paper abstracts (max. 2000 characters; in German, English or French) to: fiona.siegenthaler@unibas.ch, m.allainbonilla@unibas.ch

Deadline is 15.12.2017. The authors of selected abstracts will have to send full articles until 1.6.18. Once accepted after the peer-reviewing process, final versions are expected until 15.11.2018 for publication in spring 2019.

Reference:

CFP: Decolonial Processes in Swiss Academia, TSANTSA Dossier 24/2019. In: ArtHist.net, Nov 16, 2017 (accessed Jul 12, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/16754>>.