

## **58. Affect, Contestation, and Power: Collaboration as a Form of Decolonial Knowledge Production? (Workshop)**

***Kristina Mashimi, Freie Universität Berlin***

***Hansjörg Dilger, Freie Universität Berlin***

In face of the wide-spread call for the decolonization of knowledge production, and a heightened awareness of the power imbalances built into anthropological research and teaching, there has been a growing emphasis on 'collaboration' within and beyond academia. Together with communities and activists, anthropologists aim to align their work with the agendas of their collaborators in order to address the structural inequalities and vulnerabilities built into these kinds of projects. At the same time, collaborations in post- and decolonial settings are shaped by the potentially conflictive dynamics unfolding in these engagements, especially when it comes to dealing with unequally distributed privileges and including the knowledges of *all* participants in a collaboration.

In this panel we aim to explore the power dynamics unfolding in collaboration as well as the ways interpersonal dynamics shape knowledge practices in decolonial settings. We invite papers that draw nuanced pictures of the affective and structural constellations that let collaboration thrive – or that in turn lead to contestations, conflict and rupture. We also aim to discuss the implications of all these dynamics with regard to the epistemological foundations of knowledge production: How do the entanglements of knowledge and power materialize in and affect collaborative work with activists and members of diverse (marginalised) communities? How do these dynamics shape and reshape perceptions and ideals of collaborative anthropological engagements as a whole? And finally, are ethnographic practices like co-writing, co-researching, and co-presenting adequate means for the decolonization of knowledge production – or what other resources and methodologies do anthropologists and their collaborators require for this kind of work? Case studies may come from a wide range of decolonial anthropological engagements, including within and across universities, museums and archives, non-governmental and activist collectives, artistic and film production etc.

## **The many Faces of Power: On the Micro-politics of Engaged Scholarship**

***Lise Woensdregt, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam***

***Tara Fiorito, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam***

***Lorraine Nencel, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam***

Academia increasingly promotes collaboration with communities as a mode of socially responsive research aimed at decolonized knowledge production. From the perspective of the marginalized – and inspired by framings such as “nothing about us, without us” – politicized communities increasingly demand inclusion within research processes. Our paper intends to unsettle normalized notions of power and privilege within such collaborations, through which it is often uncritically assumed that the power in these relationships is automatically with researchers. This in turn leads to hegemonic assumptions concerning ideal ways to collaborate, for example by prioritizing the voice of the marginalized. Drawing from our collaborative research projects with marginalized communities of undocumented youth and queer male sex workers, we reflect on the opportunities, tensions, and complexities that may arise from collaboration for both the researcher and the community. We particularly focus on the role of community brokers, who often mediate between researchers and communities and strategically make use of discourses on decolonial knowledge production for symbolic and material gains. We argue that researchers should more attentively analyze the micro-politics of engaged scholarship in order to reconfigure research collaboration practices to further enhance social justice.

**“We don’t want another white guy to tell our story!”**

***Elisabeth Seyerl-Langkamp, Stiftung Humboldt Forum***

“We don’t want another white guy to tell our story!” Wynema Morris, professor at the Nebraska Indian Community College made clear when we told her about our plans to do an exhibition of Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup> Cultural Belongings that Francis La Flesche sent to the Völkerkundemuseum in Berlin. He was commissioned by the museum to assemble a collection from his own culture, the Umo<sup>n</sup>ho<sup>n</sup> in 1894. This collection became the starting point for a collaborative exhibition that opened in 2022 in the Humboldt Forum.

Collaboration with creator communities have become a new paradigm for ethnological museums. The goal of this presentation is to critically reflect on the possibilities and limits of collaborations. The exhibition shows the significance of historical museum collections for Indigenous communities today.

At the same time, the work on this project has raised some questions concerning collaborative museum work: to what extent do collaborative museum projects fundamentally and sustainably change museums? Do they run the risk of re-legitimizing the colonial institution called museum? Further, this project has encouraged us to reflect our own working methods as well as the organizational. In many ways the existing working methods, structures, and power relations in museums present obstacles for such collaborations.

### **Collaborative Storytelling Practices as a Decolonial Filmmaking Endeavour**

***arjunraj, Oyouun Kultur NeuDenken***

*Körperkino* is a concept I use to describe the embodied feelings when one is immersed in a feeling of elation and expansion that happens after the aha moment of understanding the perspective of the *other*. *Othering* is a two way process. The oppressed and the oppressor use acquired modes of conduct to perpetuate the technologies of othering. By shifting focus from the abstract and into the body and the many narratives and emotions it holds, carries and embodies, I have been devising methods to activate and thereafter reciprocate such embodied knowledge and create affective films from it. In the paper I'd like to discuss some of the methods that are employed and the results that come across when radical collaborative storytelling happens with bodies having a lived reality in the margin. I'd call them 'liminal' bodies. Furthermore, I'd like to share some knowledge while creating knowledge with different marginalized communities and the many challenges that came with this practise based knowledge. What would films and knowledge produced from these methods look like? Who would it serve? What are the limitations and challenges to practicing intersectionality especially as they are practiced in the current polarizing, hate inducing cancel culture?

## **The Pitfalls of Collaborative Knowledge Production: Theatre in the High Atlas, Morocco**

***Nina ter Laan, University of Cologne***

This paper discusses a case study in which theater was used as a form of collaborative ethnography, aligning with the call for collaborative knowledge production within the framework of the third wave of decolonizing anthropology (Pels 2022). The theater project was conducted in a small village in the High Atlas of Morocco, as part of an established broader interdisciplinary research program between socio-informatics and cultural anthropology. I discuss the opportunities and challenges presented by collecting and analyzing ethnographic data through theater. On the one hand, the theater project contributed to collaborative knowledge production by working and learning with research participants to get to the heart of their experiences. Yet, it also created many problems and challenges. Instead of decolonizing the research, in many ways the colonial dynamics were actually confirmed. I discuss the many risks and paradoxes of this collaborative research project by tracing the specific points of de/coloniality during the fieldwork. Using DeVore's understanding of 'vanguardism' as a critique of 'giving voice' (2021), I dissect how a collaborative endeavor played out in practice. I will also address methodological issues on how to analyze such a collaborative project and disseminate the results.