

Postgraduate Conference

Participation in Postcolonial Wor(l)ds

September 29 – October 1, 2022



Participation both depends on and produces agency. Therefore, it is always embedded in power structures and power remains unequally distributed. Though empires are long gone, neo-colonial structures of domination continue to exploit the so-called Global South, to privilege Eurocentric knowledge traditions over non-Eurocentric knowledge, and to exclude racialized subjects or people and communities from erstwhile colonized countries from power positions. For decades, postcolonial subjects have worked against imperial forms of oppression. They continuously labor to create space for local and hitherto marginalized world views and experiences. Processes of (self-)translation produce spaces of articulation and enable participation. Particularly in migratory contexts, knowledge and experience travel and are translated (or not), allowing for self-assertive and dynamic participation. Through complex practices of translation as well as a multiplicity of other strategies, postcolonial subjects reclaim their right to participate in diverse fields of global exchange such as economy, politics or discourse.

Although postcolonial literatures facilitate discursive and social participation of marginalized groups, the very access to literature also is subject to regulative forces such as the publishing industry, raising far-reaching questions concerning the rights and possibilities of participation in the literary field. Not only do books have to be considered marketable to enter the global literary field, but authorship as a form of participation in the broader literary and public sphere is entangled in normative structures. In this regard, factors such as race, class, sex, gender, and sexuality are highly influential: Only recently, Bernardine Evaristo became the first black woman to win the renowned Booker Prize. As she shared the prize with Margaret Atwood, a white male BBC journalist referred to the winners as “Margaret Atwood and another author”. Evidently, participation in the global literary market is marked by central institutions of the field, such as media, editors and publishing houses, which are often located in the Global North. Digital cultures and alternative forms of publishing



offer platforms for participation from postcolonial cultures.

In addition to the field of literature, other areas of social and discursive participation are also being reclaimed by postcolonial agents. Among these, systems of education are particularly relevant because they build on ways of looking at and understanding the world. In this regard, longstanding Eurocentric bias often maintains narrow concepts of education, which privilege educational systems in place in hegemonically progress-oriented societies (cf. Pirker, Hericks, and Mbali 2020). This raises important questions: How are participation and education interrelated? What counts as education from a hegemonic point of view and which discourses participate in the system of education? How does contemporary education foster participation of the postcolonial and how can postcolonial knowledge and knowledge of the postcolonial enter classrooms (cf. Lütge and Stein 2017)? In what ways does academia itself enable or foreclose participation of postcolonial scholars (cf. Bromley 2020)? And finally, which parameters regulate participation in and through education in a world shaped by colonial and neo-colonial legacies and entanglements?

All of these and many related issues are addressed by the conference. With a confirmed keynote by Dr. Malaka Shwaikh, University of St Andrews, and a reading by Elizabeth Chakrabarty, the conference generates wide-ranging opportunities for exchange. Additionally, a workshop on how to publish a dissertation with Dr. Lena Mattheis, University of Surrey, will be a very productive feature of the conference.

We invite contributions touching on but not limited to the following topics:

- historical forms of participation in colonial and postcolonial contexts
- postcolonial epistemologies and genesis of knowledge and meaning as forms of participation
- further factors shaping participation of marginalized groups, such as race, class, sex, gender, sexuality, dis-/ability
- access to education
- postcolonial education in the classroom and the university
- interrogations of progress as underlying normative value modelling participation
- translation of epistemologies into other knowledge systems and participation in and through translation
- participation in the global book market and factors shaping the literary publishing industry
- digital cultures as possibilities for non-hierarchical participation

in postcolonial literatures, languages and cultures.



The call for papers specifically addresses doctoral students and other junior scholars. If you are interested in participating, please send us an abstract not exceeding 250 words for a 20-minute presentation along with a short bio of up to 150 words in one PDF file. The deadline for submission is **June 30, 2022**. All e-mails should be sent to **poco-participation@hhu.de**.

The conference will take place at the Haus der Universität in Düsseldorf. We are happy to announce that we made a reservation at IBIS Hotel Düsseldorf and that we can cover your accommodation for two nights each to facilitate exchange among junior scholars.

We are also looking for ways to publish the output of the conference.

For further information, please visit **www.postcolonial-participation.hhu.de**.

We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Christina Slopek and Miriam Hinz, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf

Works Cited

Bromley, Roger. "Reading the 'Black' in the 'Union Jack': Institutionalising Black and Asian British Writing." *The Cambridge History of Black and Asian British Writing*. Eds. Mark U.

Stein, and Susheila Nasta. Cambridge University Press, 2020. 417-432.

Lütge, Christiane, and Mark U. Stein (eds.). *Crossovers: Postcolonial Studies and Transcultural Learning*. LIT, 2017.

Pirker, Eva Ulrike, Katja Hericks, and Mandisa Mbali. "Introduction." *Forward, Upward, Onward? Narratives of Achievement in African and Afro-European Contexts*. Eds. Eva Ulrike

Pirker, Katja Hericks, and Mandisa Mbali. hhu.books, 2020. 1-11.