

POLITICS OF NATURAL HISTORY

How to Decolonize the Natural History Museum?

Workshop in Berlin, September 6–7, 2018

Thursday, September 6, 2018

From 9:00 Registration

9:30–11:00 INTRODUCTION

9:30 Welcome Address
*Ina Heumann, Holger Stoecker, Mareike Vennen,
Joint research project "Dinosaurs in Berlin"*

10:00 Keynote Lecture: Conquest, Care and the Fossil Complex
Ciraj Rassool, University of the Western Cape

11:00 Break

11:30–13:20 SESSION I: Politics of Presentation

Chair: *Patricia Rahempour, Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Freie Universität Berlin*

11:30 Decolonizing Botanical Collections
Anna Haebich, Curtin University

12:10 Web-like Analogies as a Decolonizing Order in Natural History Display
Fritha Langerman, University of Cape Town

12:50 **Comment:** *Jonathan Fine, Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*

13:20 Lunch

15:00–16:50 SESSION II: Politics of Participation

Chair: *Sybilla Nikolow, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin*

15:00 The Natural History Museum and the Pluriverse: Decoloniality at the Periphery
Ayesha Keshani, Goldsmiths, University of London

15:40 Putting Metadata to Work: Modelling Information on Historical Collections of Natural History in Social Justice Contexts
*Martha Fleming, British Museum / University of Göttingen,
Dominik Hünninger, University of Göttingen*

16:20 **Comment:** *Tahani Nadim, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin /
Museum für Naturkunde Berlin*

16:50 Break

18:30 PANEL DISCUSSION: Koloniales Erbe und Naturkunde

*Larissa Förster, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Michael Ohl, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin
Ciraj Rassool, University of the Western Cape
Bénédicte Savoy, Technische Universität Berlin*

Chair: *Andreas Eckert, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*

The panel discussion will be held in German, simultaneous translation will be provided by an interpreter via head phones for the English speaking audience. English discussion contributions are welcome.

Friday, September 7, 2018

9:45 Welcome Address

Johannes Vogel, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin

10:00–12:00 SESSION III: Politics of Objects: Heritage, Property, Responsibility

Chair: *Anja Schwarz, Universität Potsdam*

10:00 Colonial Collections at Berlin's Botanical Museum
Katja Kaiser, CeNak – Center of Natural History

10:40 Java Man and the Colonial Legacy of Fossil Collections
*Caroline Driehuisen, Open University of the Netherlands,
Fenneke Sysling, Utrecht University*

11:20 **Comment:** *Ina Heumann, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin*

12:00 Lunch

13:30–15:20 SESSION IV: Museum Practices and Politics

Chair: *David Blankenstein, Deutsches Historisches Museum*

13:30 Birds from the Colonies at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin: Backgrounds, Relevance and Development
Sylke Frahnert, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin

14:10 The Natural History Museum in Nigeria: Dynamics and Impact
Lucky Ugbudian, Federal University Ndufu Alike Ikwo

14:50 **Comment:** *Manuela Bauche, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin*

15:20 **Closing Remarks**

The workshop is conceived and organized by the joint project "Dinosaurs in Berlin. *Brachiosaurus brancai* as an Icon of Politics, Science, and Popular Culture":
*Ina Heumann (PAN – Perspectives on Nature, Museum für Naturkunde Berlin)
Holger Stoecker (Institute for Asian and African Studies, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)
Mareike Vennen (Institut für Kunstwissenschaften und Historische Urbanistik, Technische Universität Berlin)*

Funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Further information: <https://www.museumfuernaturkunde.berlin/en/forschung/leitthemen/dinosaurs-berlin>

VENUE: Technische Universität Berlin, Main Building, Conference Room 3006 (3rd floor, accessible via elevator), Straße des 17. Juni 135, 10623 Berlin

Natural history museums preserve a considerable, yet often unacknowledged part of the world's colonial heritage. Their identity, collections, exhibitions and, importantly, much of their research activities are based on objects which underwent multifold translocations from colonized territories to museums in the Global North. Natural history museums took advantage of colonial endeavours and were deeply entangled in the exploitation of the colonies. However, natural objects are often displayed as "of Nature" – and framed within a narrative of Western scientific accomplishments and rationality. The complex histories of acquisition as well as the political context of the discovery and translocation of objects are thus rendered invisible. The workshop takes the growing tension between the entangled history of natural history museums and colonialism on the one hand and the invisibility of those entanglements on the other as a starting point for considerations about decolonization.

CONTACT & REGISTRATION (closing date August 30, 2018): pan@mfn.berlin



POLITICS