

Call for Papers (Conference)

Comparing Colonialism: Beyond Modern Exceptionalism

26–28 September 2019

Colonial expansion is a common, nearly universal phenomenon in human history. Though colonialism has shaped the modern world in many ways, it is not limited to modernity. Conquering foreign lands and subjugating other people(s) are basic processes in the formation of empires and states, and they existed long before the modern era. This interdisciplinary conference, hosted by the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Basel, seeks to explore varieties of colonialism throughout history and to uncover their common features. The organizers strongly encourage the submission of paper proposals on pre-modern and/or non-Western forms of colonialism. But, by comparing different areas, periods, and forms of colonial expansion and rule, the conference will also examine the (possibly) unique characteristics of modern European expansion. Theoretical reflections and empirical case studies or syntheses dealing with one or more of the following problems are welcome:

- The terms *colonization*, *colony*, and *colonialism* are notoriously vague. If *colony* refers to something more or different than settlement, then what does it mean exactly to colonize? And under what conditions is it appropriate to speak of *colonialism* rather than (just) *colonization* or *colony*?
- Although the process of colonization has a direction—basically, it is one group colonizing another—there are feedbacks and interactions. What are, in detail, the mechanisms, forms, and dynamics of such colonial entanglements?
- If colonization is a process, what typical stages does it run through? Do different paths result in different kinds of colonies? And, vice versa, what are the trajectories that lead to more autonomy and, eventually, complete decolonization (if there is such a thing)?
- Colonial expansion is closely linked to processes of empire formation and state building. But does every territorial expansion of a polity result in the colonial subjugation of another polity (even if it is an acephalous community), or are there different paths that lead to the full integration of conquered territories and people? Are empires or evolving states necessarily colonial powers? When and how does an empire become a state (or vice versa)?
- There is a huge variety of *colonialisms*. What criteria can distinguish different types of colonies, colonial empires, and cultures of colonialism? Is the formal organization of the centre crucial (city republic, monarchy, nation state, etc.), or is the way in which power is actually exercised in the colonial periphery more important? And what role do cultural representations (narratives, images, monuments, etc.) play? Is racism a necessary feature of colonial expansion?

Each paper will be allotted 25 minutes for presentation followed by 15 minutes for discussion. Paper proposals should not be longer than 500 words. The deadline for submission is 30 September 2018. Please send your paper proposal together with a short CV as e-mail attachments to:
comparing.colonialism@unibas.ch

Invited and confirmed speakers:

Prof Hans-Joachim Gehrke (University of Freiburg, and Free University of Berlin), Prof Wolfgang Reinhard (University of Freiburg, and Max Weber Centre for Advanced Cultural and Social Studies, Erfurt), Prof Klaus Schlichte (University of Bremen), Prof George Steinmetz (University of Michigan, and European Centre for Sociology and Political Science, Paris)

Organizers:

Prof Axel T. Paul, Department of Social Sciences at the University of Basel
Dr Matthias Leanza, Department of Social Sciences at the University of Basel