



A Tradition of Innovation

Dealing with complex heritage: revisiting university pasts in contemporary practice

Coimbra Group Heritage Working Group

Call for Chapters

Editors: Peter Bille Larsen (University of Geneva), Markéta Křížová (Charles University), Gertjan Plets (Utrecht University)

How do universities deal with problematic or complex heritage issues from colonialism, exclusion of minorities to authoritarian practices?

This book aims to explore and learn from how universities address “uneasy”, “problematic” or “difficult” heritage (in both its tangible as well as intangible forms) of university institutions. In the spirit of diversity, the volume covers a wide range of countries. The volume also aims to be an important contribution to university dialogue on the role and responsibility of present-day university institutions faced with such legacies as well as their significance for contemporary research, education and representational practice. In this sense, we aim for a volume that can be shared with wider university networks and contribute towards mutual learning in our respective university networks.

Drawing on both past and present relationships such as colonial histories, North-South relations and collections and university practices under authoritarianism, universities are critical sites of thinking and societal practice when it comes to locally, nationally and globally significant heritage. This not only involves looted cultural objects or sensitive exhibits (human remains, religious objects, “trophies”) in university museum collections, but also the whole complex heritagization of thought, expression and representation shaping university histories, while (potentially) perpetuating notions of racial, social and cultural inequalities. Whereas both colonialism (active promotion of colonial expansion and colonialist thought) and authoritarian regimes in some respects shaped scientific development for European universities in all branches of science, it also left long standing - sometimes silenced - legacies of exclusion and injustices in need of repair.

We invite contributions from university scholars, but also student movements and observers involved in one way or another in exploring or challenging the significance and implications of difficult heritage.

Chapters may concern case studies of university heritage, both within and outside of Coimbra Group, involve comparative cases, different historical periods and political contexts. Contributors will be invited to present draft chapters at the next complex heritage meeting scheduled by the Coimbra Group Heritage Working Group at Charles University in Prague next Spring (March 2024).

Please send in (to marketa.krizova@ruk.cuni.cz) an abstract by Thursday, June 22. This will help us group themes and prepare the book proposal. If you are unable to contribute, but know of other people in your university that might be interested, please share.

Peter Larsen and Markéta Křížová