Helen Verran
Michi Knecht
MiM Workshop Series

To 'Decenter', You Need an Ethics of Dissensus

What does the idea of "decentering" ethnographic museums entail from the perspective of an empirical philosopher, STS-researcher and postcolonial knowledge worker? Helen Verran talks with Michi Knecht about acknowledging incompatibilities beyond universalist claims and "objects before classification" as starting points. Museums, as potential sites of the multiverse, need to seriously cultivate a culture of dissent and collaboration with all those who disagree with the Museum's current epistemic practices and perhaps disavow the metaphysical commitments those practices express. The examples Verran uses in this podcast make reference to some specific exhibitions, i.e. the temporary exhibition *Beyond Compare: Art from Africa in the Bode Museum*, curated by Julien Chapuis, Jonathan Fine and Paola Ivanova, which was shown at the Bode Museum, Berlin from 27 October 2017 to 24 November 2019 (see Helen Verran (2019): Generative Ruptures and Moments of Confluence. In: Confluence, Online Journal of World Philosophies, and information on the exhibition from the Bode Museum, Berlin, via: https://www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/beyond-compare-art-from-africa-in-the-bode-museum/).

This interview is part of our "Museums in Motion Workshop Series". Contributions in the form of podcasts will be uploaded every Tuesday. The series curates dialogues about the future of museums and colonial collections in a global context. Conceived as a workshop, it presents conversations in an ongoing debate with scholars, curators, activists and others across space.

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For those who prefer to listen to the podcast on the go, we provide the episode as mp3 file here. After a right click on the audio bar, you can select 'save file' and download it to your device.

Helen Verran *is an Australian historian and empirical philosopher of science. She primarily works in postcolonial STS (Social Studies of Science and Technology), from where she also contributes to the ontological-turn-debates in the Social and Cultural Sciences. Currently Adjunct Professor at Charles Darwin University's Northern Institute, Helen Verran is probably best known for her book on Yoruba mathematics (Science and an African Logic, Chicago University Press 2001; Ludwik Fleck Prize in 2003), in which she develops a post-relativist theory and a relational-empiricist approach to research. On and off since 1987, she has also worked in close collaboration with Indigenous organisations in Arnhem Land / Australia's Northern Territory on topics such as knowing and the known, the use of digital technologies, doing environmental management differently, and provision of education in remote settlements. More recently, she has translated insights from this work in Yoruba and Yolngu organizations into current debates on the possibilities of de- and anti-colonial museums.*

Michi Knecht *is Professor for Social Anthropology and co-speaker of the Worlds of Contradiction-Platform at Bremen University. Her research focuses on interconnections between knowledge practices and social forms. At the intersections of Anthropology and STS she has investigated assisted reproductive technologies, poverty, political and religious movements, new forms of kinship, naturecultures, anonymity regimes in transformation and ethnographic museums as knowledge spaces. Most rent publications: Europa dezentrieren. Globale Verflechtungen neu denken (ed. with Jens Adam, Regina Römhild, Manuela Bojadzijev, Pawel Lewicki, Nurhak Polat & Rika Spiekermann, 2019 / Campus Publishers); Iconoclasm and the Restitution Debate. In: HAU – Journal of Ethnographic Theory 10 (3):*

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919-927, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/711942 (with Anna Brus & Martin Zillinger 2020).