



CHARLES UNIVERSITY

CALL FOR PAPERS

Decolonizing Ethnographic Museums:

Provenance Research and Restitution Politics in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe

Ethnographic collections and museums in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe offer unique perspectives on the entangled histories of imperialism and colonialism that have not been scholarly investigated to the same extent as those of Western European countries such as Britain or France. While some museums, such as the British Museum, the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Musée du Quai Branly, or some objects, such as the Benin Bronzes, the Rosetta Stone, or the Koh-i-Noor diamond, have received significant attention, other contexts and objects beyond these dominant colonial contexts have been relatively neglected. However, exploring the contexts of Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe presents new challenges due to their complex historical trajectories. The collections and museums of today's nation-states came together in multifaceted ways: as part of the Habsburg, Ottoman, Prussian, or Tsarist empires or through individual collectors, scientists, trade missions, and wealthy travelers. While they might also hold objects of heightened public attention, many other cases, collections, and objects have received little attention.

Nevertheless, direct and indirect participation and benefit from the colonial systems of exploitation and rule persisted. Decolonizing collections and ethnographic museums in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe face additional challenges through the specific historical circumstances in which these collections grew, such as having inflicted or endured internal colonialism, missing or unclear documentation of diplomatic or trade missions, or structural obstacles to implementing provenance research and restitution policies on national levels. At the same time, these collections and museums are now also subject to current political contexts, ongoing nation-building agendas, and current public sentiments. Examining these cases will elucidate the entangled histories and complex dynamics of provenance research and restitution politics beyond the well-known cases and predominant scholarly narratives.

For this special issue, we welcome submissions on decolonizing ethnographic museums, with a focus on provenance research and restitution politics in Central, Eastern, and Southern European contexts.

1. Collections shaped in contexts of internal colonization and/or collections shaped by empires not directly involved in oversea colonies.
2. Challenges and opportunities encountered in provenance research in above contexts.
3. Museum collaborations and networking across the region of Central, Eastern and Southern Europe.
4. The institutional role of curators, provenance researchers, museum directors, and museum educators in shaping discourses on decolonization and in engaging in provenance research and restitution activities themselves, especially in regard to “difficult” or “unresolved” cases.
5. The roles that indigenous activists and researchers, as well as contemporary artists and artistic researchers, play in decolonizing museums.
6. Historiographies of decolonizing museums and collections in these regions.
7. Legal approaches to decolonization processes of museums and collections in these regions. Authors are encouraged to contribute original research, theoretical analyses, case studies, comparative studies, or critical reflections on these and related topics.



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Submission Guidelines

- The journal publishes academic papers (6,000–9,000 words), reviews, and event reports (up to 3,000 words).
- Creative and experimental submissions such as photo essays, formats with forum discussions, and multi-modal ethnography are also welcome.
- Please submit an abstract of approximately 250-300 words delineating the scope and aims of the article, along with a short biographical note on the author.

Review Process

Articles, review articles, and essays submitted to the journal are subject to a double-blind peer review process, which may include one or two rounds of evaluation. Manuscripts are treated as confidential documents during this process. Submissions will be evaluated based on their fit with the described theme, but contributions outside this scope are also welcome as long as they relate to the topic.

Important Dates

- Call for Papers Release: July 2023
- Deadline for Abstracts: 11th September 2023
- Notification of Acceptance: mid-October 2023
- Final Manuscript Due: 29th February 2024
- Publication Date: September 2024

Please ensure all submissions adhere to the journal's formatting guidelines, including the citation style and referencing requirements. Detailed formatting guidelines can be found on the journal website: <https://urbanpeople.cuni.cz/LMENG-21.html>.

For informal queries to discuss your ideas, please contact melanie.sindelar@fhs.cuni.cz

Formatting guidelines



Melanie Sindelar email

