

Decolonizing Knowledge

Welcome to this event about decolonizing knowledge on behalf of Brill Publishers. We will tell you about our new initiative Bridging Humanities and some of the projects already online. We will have a discussion and listen to music in between. Please feel free to participate any time during this evening. Let's get an idea what the future of scholarly publishing might be.

The modern western view of knowledge is NOT a universal neutral view, applicable to all people at all times. Our speech and written texts are drenched in presumptions: just to name a few examples I came across these last few months:

- The Australian outback is empty.
- The Mari archeological expedition studied stations and settlements of primitive cultures
- Modern life is enabled by the use of materials in its technologies.

We talk about modernities and development, but are we really developing as a human species? My favorite research question is: how primitive was early man? More and more new discoveries about our ancestors tell us that

primitive and modern are not very clear concepts. Today we travel faster from A to B, but we are on the road longer than half a century ago. Within London the speed of traffic is lower nowadays than it was a century ago. We are losing basic knowledge about our environment. We only measure our progress according to speed and technology. But are those valid concepts?

Achille Mbembe said: it is crucial to expand the necessity for change and “an entirely new struggle” beyond the boundaries of humanity as such..... To challenge the fundamentals of neo-liberalism, the financialized economy, national-chauvinism, anthropocentrism and humanism, technology and science, and new forms of racism, because “true decolonization necessarily centers on ‘the destiny of humankind’ and not of one race, color or ethnos” .

Living in the ‘Anthropocene’ the need for a whole new perspective on humanity and its relation to the non-human world becomes pressing when we want to prevent our own extinction.

Brill is involved in Bridging Humanities because we are interested in what can be achieved by this initiative, this platform, this journal. We are working with our partners Voice4Thought, LeidenASA and the Africa Studies Centre.

For Brill it is important to underscore the academic quality of the journal, the peer review, the accessibility, the discoverability. We are already indexed by Google scholar.

Bridging Humanities – Platform for Alternative Methodologies is a peer reviewed, interdisciplinary and multi-area space online. We think we can bring across scholarly information not only in text, but also in images, video and sound.

Bridging Humanities includes original research from the humanities intended as an open field that is connected with other disciplines. Each publication is an interactive online space in which text and visuals are used as sources to produce and present knowledge from the field and from different actors.

We want to break barriers between disciplines, between languages and between cultures. That sounds ambitious – and it is. We don't know how this will develop, but we think it is necessary to look for new ways to disseminate knowledge. Just throwing texts on the internet in open access is not the solution.

Using this new format, Bridging Humanities encourages researchers to experiment with new methodologies for publication in which the importance of the digital is recognized as an integral part of the publication and

research process. It will appeal to different groups of knowledge providers.

We need to have a critical look at the power of knowledge and how knowledge is monetized, archived, restricted, monopolized. The academic world should look at itself and break out of existing hierarchies. We think we can contribute to this process with 'Bridging Humanities'.

Let's see what we can achieve tonight. Let's start.