



Restitution, Reparations, *Reparation* – Towards a New Global Society? International Summer School | Call for Participation

“The way in which we can address the irreparable is to still have in us what Barack Obama famously called the ‘audacity of hope’.” Souleymane Bachir Diagne

In the summer of 2021, the newly founded Cluster for European Research (CEUS) at Saarland University and Villa Vigoni – German-Italian Center for European Dialogue are launching a long-term cooperation with the aim of organizing joint events that reflect on the current state of Europe and re-think its relations with the world. Following the initiative of Christiane Solte-Gresser and Markus Messling, the first ‘European Laboratory of Excellence’ (Villa Vigoni, 9–13 September 2021) focuses on the reparation and/or irreparability of subjectivity, history, and nature. From a decolonial vantage point, the summer school wants to explore the possibilities and limits of a multidirectional commemorative culture by taking into consideration different historical constellations in which crimes against humanity have shaken up the very idea of ‘humanity.’

The call for reparations – financial compensation for the violence and the injustices of slavery and colonialism – is presumably as old as these systems of injustice themselves. But only rarely was this call honored by the powers that be. To name just one example, after the Haitian Revolution in 1804, it was the plantation owners and not the formerly enslaved that were compensated for the loss of their alleged ‘property.’ From the very beginning, therefore, claims for reparations, but also for symbolic reparation and recognition of the wrongs committed, have repeatedly resurfaced in public discourse and it may be no coincidence that today – ever since the discussion on the ‘3rd UN World Conference against Racism’ held in Durban in 2001 and the Black Lives Matter movements – reparations are once again being negotiated and fought over on a global scale.

This may be no coincidence, because these debates come at a time when both Europe and the ‘West’ are facing a deep crisis of legitimacy, in which the wounds and divisions of global society become increasingly apparent, and the destruction of the world as an ecosystem has become undebatable. Europe finds itself confronted with the downsides of its long unproblematized promise of progress – not least of all due to insistent voices from the former colonies –, such as racism, persistent coloniality, and the destruction of the environment. At the same time, social inequalities are increasing and old power structures remain in place as we witness regarding the struggle for vaccine distribution during the global pandemic. How does Europe want to position itself in such a time of crisis? Does it take the critique of modernity and its problematic implications, shaped by the postcolonial debate, as an opportunity to question its positioning in the world and to address past injustices?

Drawing on these questions, this summer school **at the German-Italian Center for European dialogue, Villa Vigoni (September 9–13, 2021) is dedicated to the topic: “Restitution, Reparations, *Reparation* – Towards a New Global Society?”** It takes at its starting point the ethical consequences associated with the call for material reparations: (How) can reparation be conceived if it cannot compensate materially for what has been destroyed, but needs to be more than a purely symbolic act? Is the possibility of addressing the irreparable – as the philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne understands it – the only starting point for a new common humanity? And is there not a risk that forms

¹ <https://www.rhinozeros-projekt.de/zeitschrift/das-projekt>

of reparation are instrumentalized for geopolitical and strategic power interests, inhibiting once again an equal footing in the negotiations between Europe and the world?

These questions will be discussed from four main axes, drawing on the expertise of the individual faculty members. In all of them, a central role is afforded to the role of narrations for discourses and processes of reparation. The faculty of the summer school consists of literary scholar Aurélia Kalisky (Berlin) with her research on testimony in the context of the Shoah and colonial crimes; Italian author and public intellectual Igiaba Scego (Rome), who addresses the experience of trauma as well as the possibilities of healing in (post)colonial contexts in her multifaceted literary work; sociologist Angelica Pesarini (Florence) and social anthropologist Jonas Tinius (Saarbrücken), who will explore social preconditions and consequences of decolonial museum work in Italy and Germany; the writer Helena Janeczek (Rome) with her literary work on memory and the Shoah and her latest Premio Strega-winning novel about the photographer Gerda Taro, *La ragazza con la Leica* (2019); and philosopher Olivier Remaud (Paris) with his recent publication *Penser comme un iceberg* (2020), in which he proposes to rethink the relationship between humans and nature.

Format

The format of the summer school provides for open discussions as well as smaller reading groups alongside lectures by the faculty introduced above. One afternoon is reserved for a ceremony celebrating the inauguration of the cooperation between Villa Vigoni and Saarland University.

Application

The summer school invites PhD students from the humanities and social sciences as well as graduate students holding a Master's degree that are about to start their doctoral studies. Applicants are asked to send a letter of motivation detailing their research interests and their connection to the topic of the summer school (approx. 1 page) and an academic curriculum vitae to summerschool-reparation@uni-saarland.de by **1st July 2021**. Following the summer school, some of the participants will have the opportunity to publish a contribution to a publication on the topics discussed.

The conference will be held in French and English; a good understanding of both languages is mandatory.

Expenses

The expenses for meals and accommodation are covered for the participants. Travel expenses (rail travel 2nd class/Economy Class) are reimbursed up to a maximum of 300 euro, all trips combined.

Corona safety concept

For the time being, we assume that the summer school can take place on site in compliance with Villa Vigoni's well-tried hygiene concept. If this should be made impossible by the development of the pandemic, we will inform you in a timely manner about alternative possibilities (a hybrid format, the postponement of the conference, or limitation to the aforementioned publication would be feasible alternatives).

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CEUS – Cluster für Europaforschung