



Zurich Human Geography Colloquium

The Zurich Human Geography Colloquium is jointly organised by the units of Economic Geography, Political Geography, Space, Nature and Society and Social and Cultural Geography at the Department of Geography, Zurich University. All interested are cordially invited.

Tuesday, 17 November 2020, 4 pm on Zoom, no registration necessary:
<https://uzh.zoom.us/j/98113211432?pwd=bn52emtPbFl1ajI5amROOHJqK1RkZz09>

Prof Sarah Radcliffe

Department of Geography, University of Cambridge

Decolonizing geography and the more-than-one-world

Given Europe's predominance in forging modern socio-spatial relations in colonialism, metropolitan centres have adjudicated on what counts as worth knowing, and judge their frameworks to have 'universal' applicability. These premises reinforce a self-sealing "one-world world," unable and unwilling to acknowledge other knowledges and realities. The one-world world doctrine was crafted in Europe, embedded in institutions of state-craft, learning and science, before being transplanted (again and again) into colonized areas. In this dynamic, western notions were and often continue to be viewed as superior to local forms of knowledge, language, experiment and religion, reinforcing the expectation of Eurocentric knowledge spreading across the world (Santos 2017).

In the one-world logic, the world comprises a series of entities - humans, nature, geology for instance -- which are presumed to be discoverable and categorised in agreed ways. Yet categories arise from and validate one perspective and close down others, and are often imbued with cultural biases. Colonial practices of knowledge production were established on the basis of comparisons between non-European societies and places with European ones, a spatial framework for ranking that endures to the present.

However these assumptions are increasingly subject to critique. Geography is starting to recognise the limitations of 'one-world world,' prompting steps towards decolonizing how the discipline knows the world by dismantling colonial-modern forms of world-making. My talk argues that delinking from the one-world world and embracing plural ways of knowing the world other-wise is crucial for geography. I make the case for geography to pluralize and analyse the 'more-than-one-world'.



Sarah A Radcliffe, from the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, has worked for many years with diverse low-income and socially marginalized groups in the Andean countries of Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Her research examines their experiences of being involved in projects to alleviate poverty, build the nation, develop infrastructure, and formally educate populations. Her publications include accounts of Indigenous women's critical responses to development efforts at participation and social inclusion; Indigenous peoples' transnational networking to forge decision-making power over development projects, and critical accounts of Ecuador's buen vivir commitments. More broadly, she is engaged in conversations about decolonizing the discipline of geography; her book 'Decolonizing Geography: An Introduction' will be published by Polity Press in 2021.