Postcolonial Digital Connections and Collections

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In May 2018, ZIRS in cooperation with UCL held a [conference](#) on postcolonial digital connections. We brought together researchers from different parts of the world to look into questions of reasoning, concepts, and consequences of digitizing cultural heritage. A number of the contributions to the conference can be found here. They comprise examples from museum collections, national libraries, 20[th]century literature, and photographic archives. They form a ground for reconsidering both what it means for cultural heritage to be postcolonial and to be digitized. What are the challenges and chances when the Berlin Ethnographic Museum decides to cooperate with students and experts in Amazonia to programme and design a database on the collections from Amazonia held in Berlin? What problems does the online availability of a Quechua manuscript solve, and what remains unresolved with its custody at the National Library of Spain? What other legal options beside Creative Commons or national copyrights exist when it comes to digital and online disseminated cultural heritage? How can traditional knowledge and indigenous views on online availability be reflected in legal demarcation? How would Lagos benefit from a digital humanities' approach to some of the most important literary works on the city? What do collaborative practices between museums and communities entail, and where are the limits to online and offline cooperation? And do these necessarily need to include institutions of the Global North, or (where) do digital means open avenues for different understandings of postcolonial heritage?

These are but some of the questions posed during the conference and in the write-ups presented [here](). They led and continue to lead to discussions that make us consider individual contexts of digitization projects, the conditions of 'original' and technical reproduction, of people involved, or available infrastructures. Their commonality lays in the intentional use of digital technology for access to cultural heritage, albeit the different modes – technical as well as conceptually – challenge our understanding of what postcolonial digital connections can or should be. With the digital entering museums and archives, these institutions' entanglement with colonial and postcolonial can become apparent, if we understand the digital as potential instruments or mirrors for recognising and investigating the logics of museums and archives. The digital might even become an agent, as does the the Other Nefertiti, who appears here too. The bot becomes an agent of postcolonial digital connections, and states so most clearly in her own words: 'I am taking on an agency for millions of stolen and looted objects in the museums of the Global North.'