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Schweizerische Ethnologische Gesellschaft  
Société Suisse d'Ethnologie  
Associazione Svizzera di Antropologia  
Swiss Anthropological Association



Membre de l'Académie suisse  
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# Call for Papers

**N.B. This is a Call for Papers for an additional panel,  
the regular call for the other panels is closed.**



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## **Panel Title: Beyond the innocent museum – Swiss Ethnographic museums in exchange with source communities?**

**Convenor:** Mareile Flitsch, Ethnographic Museum, University of Zurich

**Contact:** [flitsch@vmz.uzh.ch](mailto:flitsch@vmz.uzh.ch)

**Thursday November 10, 2022, 16:30 – 18:00**

The panel addresses current issues of provenance research, of sharing, of collaboration with source communities on the collections held in ethnographic museums. While a range of different projects and formats have been unfolding in the Swiss museumscape and beyond, it is slowly becoming evident that we are witnessing a shift “beyond the innocent museum”, not only with regard to the future role of museums, but also with regard to the multiple challenges and opportunities emerging from collaboration. All museums are currently rethinking the conditions and aims of collaboration, reconsidering how the “object diaspora” (Paul Basu) relationship established by accumulating objects is rewriting the relatedness of museums and Europe/the West with source communities. Which conditions, what funding, which competences do the collaboration partners and museums already have, need to form or would need to fully draw on to realize the potential of this relatedness in view of decolonization? And how do the notions of collaboration as “give and take” and exchange as multidirectional moves add to decentering museum collections and will eventually lead us to jointly formulate entirely new research questions? Where are we heading, where could we head, and what would be needed to place exchange with source communities on a new footing?

Please send your proposal to Mareile Flitsch [flitsch@vmz.uzh.ch](mailto:flitsch@vmz.uzh.ch)

**Deadline for paper submissions: September 10, 2022**

This panel will be held at the  
Annual Meeting of the Swiss Anthropological Association (description below).



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## **Annual Meetings of the Swiss Anthropological Association (SAA)**

### **SEG Jahrestagung**

### **Colloque Annuel de la SSE**

**Neuchâtel, November 10-12, 2022**

## **“Give and Take – Anthropology as Exchange”**

Contemporary anthropology is marked by a sustained effort to rethink anthropologists' relations with the people, objects and organizations with which they work. If the myth of the innocent scientist (participating merely better to observe) was never fully credible, over the past decades it has been scrapped almost entirely. This does not mean that anthropology has abandoned its claims to scientificity, nor that the forms of knowledge we produce are merely subjective or impressionistic. To the contrary, in much contemporary thinking about the nature of our knowledge, it is precisely anthropology's reflexive, intersubjective and situated qualities that guarantee its validity and value. Anthropologists engage in processes of “give and take” in the double sense of this phrase: they both exchange ideas, experiences and value(s) with others and continually renegotiate the terms of this exchange.

Anthropology is both a perspective on and a form of intervention in the world, and it is at its most powerful when it consciously reflects on its discursive and practical positionality. This complex epistemology has resulted in a multiplicity of methods, subject-positions, thematic foci and theoretical frameworks from which it can go about its business, many of which have been thoroughly discussed in the literature. In this Annual Meeting, we aim further to explore these multiple methods and themes, through panels that present specific forms of giving and of taking, and explore their varied theoretical, political, ethical, epistemological and methodological implications.

### *Giving*

Since the 1980s, anthropology has been inventing new avenues for giving knowledge, objects and experiences back to the groups, organizations and individuals who are their partners in knowledge production. These new forms of restitution, in the broad sense of the word, are driven by crucial critiques of the discipline's colonial and metropolitan origins and by demands for practices of accountability that are long overdue. However, through



impatience to do the right thing, they perhaps insufficiently acknowledge the ambiguities and unanticipated consequences of giving back. What and how are anthropologists to give back? Mauss pointed out nearly a century ago, in the context of gift exchange, that returning the same object one receives is a violation of the gift-giving code, amounting to a refusal to receive the gift in the first place. To maintain dynamic equilibrium, the object (practice, knowledge) returned must therefore be augmented in some way. As James Ferguson has argued, giving is a form of sharing, raising the question of what are “rightful shares” on each side of the exchange.

### *Taking*

Less decorous but equally important are the processes by which anthropologists take material from the field in order to format it as “anthropological knowledge”. Indeed, for there to be something anthropological that we can “give back”, this taking must precede the giving. Since Foucault, anthropologists are well aware that these forms of material and semiotic extraction are conditioned by institutions of power, and this has perhaps made them shy away from exploring them in detail. Taking seriously the metaphor of exchange, the panels in this colloquium will analyze of the varied empirical, theoretical, political, methodological and ethical implications of taking, and the institutional constraints and affordances that surround them.

### *Exchange*

Finally, this colloquium will reflect collectively on anthropology as exchange in the broadest sense of this metaphor. Selected panels will elaborate on topics as varied as new theoretical paradigms for making sense of human's place in the world (from Cyrułnik's “resilience” to Rosa's “resonance”) to more classical reflections on the socioeconomic dynamics of “development” and “aid” in a world characterized by multiple forms of resource grabbing. Through panels and events, we will also discuss the negative aspect of anthropological practice for anthropologists themselves, such as risk and trauma in the field, or discouraging and exploitative professional norms, particularly as they affect younger scholars, are also welcome.