

## Taking the Humanities on the Road

### An Ideas-and-Actions Lab

#### Call for Participation



**Offen für alle Interessierten aus der Philosophisch-historischen Fakultät – und darüber hinaus!**  
Anrechenbar für Doktorierende der GSH (vgl. unten)

<b>Leitung:</b>	<b>Dr. Ruramisai Charumbira</b> , Dr. Michael Toggweiler (Begleitung)
<b>Datum/Zeit:</b>	12. März, 2018, 14:15 – 18:00 12. April, 2018, 14:15 – 18:00
<b>Raum:</b>	tba
<b>ECTS:</b>	1 (Pflicht oder Wahlpflicht ICS / Wahlpflicht SLS und GS)
<b>Anmeldung:</b>	Bis spät. 19. Februar 2018 an: <a href="mailto:toggweiler@wbkolleg.unibe.ch">toggweiler@wbkolleg.unibe.ch</a> und (falls nötig) über KSL: <a href="https://www.ksl.unibe.ch/">https://www.ksl.unibe.ch/</a> (Login mit UniBe-Account, Suche mit Titel)

This Ideas-and-Actions Lab argues that in the face of today's problems, humanities scholars should unreservedly reclaim and assert the Humanities as a space for the generation and discovery of meaning that remains vital, considering 21st century realities. This reclamation of the humanities, therefore, responds to an ever-increasing and accelerating turn to empirical, and supposedly more relevant domains. What we need is a humanities renaissance that demonstrates innovative ways of facing the future through engaged scholarship and applicable communication. Such an engagement would be the opposite of burying our heads in the (textual) sands of the past where we seem to find empowerment through an isolating cultivation of ourselves as detached experts. Rather, we ought to ask and discuss a twofold question:

- How can we make our research more meaningful for ourselves and for others?  
For example: What is the meaning of being an anthropologist, historian etc.? How do we make sense of what we are doing to ourselves and to others? How do we justify our professions? How do we reclaim expertise of and for the humanities – an expertise, which has always been there, but seems to be in question for quite some time now.
- And how can we communicate the meaningfulness of our research?  
For example: How do we, and others, benefit from the fruits of our labor? How do we explain what we are doing? How can we manage conversation – inside and outside academia, with experts and non-experts?

To become a part of this active and innovating community at the WBKolleg, UniBern, we invite scholars (from all disciplines, at all levels) who are passionate about engaged scholarship to participate in a lively conversation about “Taking the Humanities on the Road.” The initiative aims at establishing a discussion of concrete ways to better communicate our specific research and, by so doing, highlight the humanities strengths: *Verstehen*, deep description, analysis, differentiation, self-reflexivity, critical thinking, or critique.

The Ideas-and-Action Lab is part seminar (conceptualizing), part lab (doing), part marketplace (showcase & disseminating), and part life (rigorous intellectual engagement and fun!). At the first gathering, apart from a general discussion based on two short programmatic texts, participants will bring their own ideas and/or projects of work in-progress as the goal of the two Ideas-and-Actions Lab gatherings is to crowdsource ideas of visualizations, performances, exhibitions, innovative presentations, artistic interventions (and the many other ways we haven’t thought about brought forth by you) showcasing the vitality of the Humanities at the UniBern, Switzerland, and beyond. We might be able to present some of these ideas at the Faculty’s Research Day (April 30).

Required readings:

Mikhail Epstein, *The Transformative Humanities: A Manifesto* (2012);

Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Hannah Arendt, ed., (1968).

Further suggestion:

Markus Zürcher, *It’s the Humanities, Stupid!* (2016)

Please register to [toggweiler@wbkolleg.unibe.ch](mailto:toggweiler@wbkolleg.unibe.ch), if possible already with an idea you would like to discuss with the group. One sentence will do.

In addition to the Lab-meetings, we encourage you to participate in a GSH soft skills course “Wissenschaftskommunikation für die Geisteswissenschaften” (March 27, 2018, 09.15 - 17.00) organized by the Graduate School of the Humanities, which addresses particular needs regarding research accessibility of scholars from the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The workshop will be taught by Dr. Philipp Burkard, director of Science et Cité, and a Humanities scholar as well (separate call to be announced soon).



**Ruramisai Charumbira** is a historian with specializations in African and Global History. She earned her Ph.D. from [Yale University](#). Her research work is grounded in historical concepts and theories of Memory and Forgetting at individual, social, and collective levels. Her first book, [Imagining a Nation: History and Memory in Making Zimbabwe](#), is a study of the gendered contestations of national identity in a colony/nation built on the exclusion of the “Other.” Her book was a finalist for the 2016 Berkshire Conference of Women Historians’ [first book prize](#) for books published in 2015. She currently is an associated Senior Fellow at the Walter Benjamin Kolleg, Bern where she is completing work on her second book exploring themes of individual, social, and collective memory in the British Empire at the turn of the century.