



## Interdisciplinary Symposium: Decolonial Imaginaries in Literary and Urban Studies

University of Basel, 9-10 November 2023

**Abstracts by 1 September 2023**

**Attendance (without paper): Registration by 15 September 2023**

Website: [Interdisciplinary Symposium: Decolonial Imaginaries in Literary and Urban Studies](#)

The collaborative, interdisciplinary two-day symposium “Decolonial Imaginaries in Literary and Urban Studies” will bring together urban and literary scholars in an open, exploratory discussion structured around ongoing projects and methodological workshops. Rather than providing universal answers and definitions, the symposium proposes the following questions targeting current research in the fields of Literary and Urban Studies: Since cities are at the same time material *and* imagined territories or “built thought” (Sandercock 4), how can the imaginary of urban dwellers be mobilized to challenge ongoing colonialities of power? To what extent is the *decolonial imaginary* – following Emma Pérez – “a political project” (4), “that time lag between the colonial and postcolonial, that interstitial space where differential politics and social dilemmas are negotiated” (6)?

A decolonial approach in urban studies prioritizes people’s needs over profit-driven interests in neoliberal markets commodifying the urban experience and subversive practices. Literary studies has witnessed a similar shift, as evident in the rise in texts dealing with, for example, indigenous experiences and counter practices of inhabiting urban spaces, emphasizing continuities in oppression and displacement, but also in relational resistance practices and other ways of being and doing. Both emphasize ongoing practices of racial capitalism formative of colonialities of power, while opening spaces for alternative imaginaries of re-existence.

In this symposium, participants will have the opportunity to attend two keynote lectures by Catalina Ortiz and Dominic Davies, working on the intersections of various artistic and literary forms, and on architecture and infrastructure in community-oriented research, while employing decolonizing practices. Attendees will also learn about new research in panel discussions and engage with methodologies used in both fields in collaborative practical workshops, exploring the relationship between practice and imaginaries across and beyond the disciplines. Finally, participants will attend a discussion between the keynote speakers and the critically acclaimed writer Ana Filomena Amaral about her novel *Chasing Walls*.

In this way, the symposium fosters a more dynamic interdisciplinary exchange, allowing scholars to build networks across the fields. It will enable scholars to develop more nuanced projects, allow for a better understanding of current developments in the two fields, and thus spark inspiration for new research directions.

For the interdisciplinary panels, we invite 15-minute paper contributions in Literary and Urban Studies that illustrate the methodologies and approaches of both disciplines. Paper topics include, but are not limited to:

- Literary representations of urban space
- Decolonizing the urban canon
- (Postcolonial) Literary Urban Studies
- Spatial practices and mobility in literature
- Urban fiction; decolonizing urban fiction; decolonizing urban speculative fiction
- Decolonizing the city
- The seen and unseen in the city
- Post-urbicide imaginaries
- Collaborative/alternative methodologies in urban studies
- Contesting dominant politics in cities
- Radical forms of care and solidarities
- Creating/occupying/appropriating spaces

Presenters are encouraged to structure contributions in an accessible manner, keeping in mind that the audience is constituted of both scholars from within and outside the fields.

Please submit abstracts of 200-250 words, as well as a short bio note, by 1 September 2023 to the conference organizers at [decolonial-imaginaries@unibas.ch](mailto:decolonial-imaginaries@unibas.ch). Attendees without a paper need to register via email by 15 September. Please also include a short bio note and a brief explanation of your interest in the symposium. As spaces are limited, we will confirm your registrations by the end of September. In your registration, please indicate if you have any dietary requirements.

A small stipend is available for scholars with limited means. Please indicate whether you will receive travel funding from your university, or whether you would like to apply for a travel bursary. Applications by young scholars, including advanced MA students, are also encouraged.

**Symposium organizers:** [Tamara Dima Imboden](#) and [Andreea Midvighi](#)

**Contact:** [decolonial-imaginaries@unibas.ch](mailto:decolonial-imaginaries@unibas.ch)

#### Works cited

Sandercock, L. "Practising Utopia: Sustaining Cities." *The Planning Review*, vol. 38, no. 148, 2002, pp. 4–9. *Taylor & Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/02513625.2002.10556791

Perez, Emma. *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History*, Indiana UP, 1999.