



Call for Research Projects

Decolonizing Theologies, Decolonizing
the World



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The European Society for Catholic Theology calls and encourages all its members to participate in the worldwide INSeCT Research Project 2021-2024

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Background

For more than 20 years, the worldwide International Network of Societies for Catholic Theology (INSeCT) has been facilitating and coordinating theological research. A part of its initiatives, INSeCT launches three-year global research projects and invites all theologians of its member organizations to develop papers, studies and research projects etc.

The Issue

Decolonization is an unfinished project. Even after former colonies gained political independence, colonial structures continue to persist globally in economic systems, in social, cultural and epistemic relations, and also in the church. The triple violence of colonialism (political violence through oppression; economic violence through exploitation; and cultural violence through negation) reverberates in multiple forms in the overlapping crises we face today: environmental degradation, damaged health, racial oppression and gender injustice. Reckoning with the colonial mentalities that permeate institutions today, social movements calling for decolonization gain in momentum globally. Responding to local colonial histories, these initiatives are regionally diverse and focus on a range of issues that arise in the wake of colonial trauma (e.g., ‘Rhodes must fall’, Black lives matter, an increasing call in Northern Atlantic educational institutions to ‘Decolonize the Curriculum’). These ongoing decolonization initiatives are accompanied by an increasing academic interest in questions of decolonization – a growing body of research develops rewritten histories,

conceptual frameworks and alternative epistemologies aimed at contending the political, cultural and epistemological hegemony of the ‘West’ / the ‘North’. These are urgent questions also for the Church. Not least the ‘Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region’ (2019) has highlighted that a Eurocentric paradigm continues to inform the pastoral practices, liturgical forms, institutional structures and theological knowledge production in the Global Church. The persistence of such a colonial mentality and its exclusionary power structures, however, prevents the Church to be truly catholic and apostolic, a people gathered from “disciples of all nations” (cf. Mt 28:19). There is thus an urgent need to reckon with the colonial past of the Church, to confront its ongoing legacies in the present, and to develop alternative ecclesial visions that challenge and transform the deeply entrenched heritage of colonialism in the Church. Theologians are called to contribute to this process towards ecclesial decolonization by (1) critically reviewing how theological and ecclesial discourses have served to buttress colonial power/knowledge regimes in the past and present, and by (2) constructively developing theological frameworks that can foster the decolonization of the church.

Building on work already done in this field, the research project of INSeCT 2021-2024 takes up these challenges by initiating and synthesizing global theological contributions to “Decolonizing Theologies / Decolonizing the World”.

The Task for European Society for Catholic Theology

We call and invite all European Society for Catholic Theology members to participate in this research in a way that is relevant to the specific European context. We encourage you especially to form interdisciplinary teams so that different methodologies may help to understand the issue in a deeper way. Because of our moderate membership fees, European Society for Catholic Theology has no funds to support specific research projects. What we can do, however, is to provide a platform for presenting results in the upcoming volumes of European Society for Catholic Theology Studies, and we will present the main findings of European Society for Catholic Theology projects at the next INSeCT Council Meeting in 2023/24. Furthermore, we are planning an international conference on this theme in 2023 (Leuven/Manila, March 2023: more details will soon be available on the INSeCT website: <https://www.insecttheology.org/>).



In order to promote an interpersonal as well as interdisciplinary and international exchange, we ask you to share information about your publications on this issue, on academic research projects or conferences

- On the website of INSeCT:

send email to: generalsecretary@insecttheology.org

- Or posting on the Facebook group

For more information and for coordination purposes, please contact your European INSeCt representative: Prof. Judith Gruber (KU Leuven, Belgium: judith.gruber@kuleuven.be).

We look forward to an interesting, fruitful debate and exchange of ideas and research results!

Prof. Dr. Margit Eckholt

President, European Society for Catholic Theology