Swiss National Science Foundation

Group Discussion on "Decolonizing Research Funding"

Short report on the group discussion that took place during the KFPE annual conference on 5 May 2023.

1 Background

Research funding is an important aspect of research collaborations (for initiating new collaborations but also for financing existing projects) and is therefore part of the debate on decolonizing research collaborations. In recent years, a certain change in research funding has been initiated thanks to "research on research" or the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). However, these changes did not have a specific focus on decolonising research funding. The discussion during the workshop was along the following two guiding questions:

- What are the general challenges for/within research funding (submission, evaluation, reporting, etc.)?

- What are elements that could help to decolonize research funding?

2 Challenges in Research Funding

The participants detected several challenges in the current funding landscape but also in funding practices. On the one hand side, there is a wish for more funding possibilities for research which has a societal impact, as well as longer funding periods to establish partnerships, especially when a transdisciplinary approach is chosen. Indeed, the funding landscape is fragmented and limited. Additionally, there might be a lack of knowledge within the research community about the different funding schemes already available. On the other hand, it is deemed difficult that the research funding is always distributed through the Swiss PI. As such, the funding itself creates a power imbalance and a bias in research priorities. As the calls / funding instruments as well as the research ideas are developed in the global north, the work of global south researchers is less recognized. Pyramidal culture ignores the advantages of equal partnerships, and the funding tends to serve the usual suspects.

3 Elements which could help Decolonizing Research Funding

In order to strengthen equal partnerships and involvement of Southern partners, co-design and co-creation should be promoted. This will foster resilience, empowerment, and ownership. Especially for transdisciplinary research, the eligibility and evaluation criteria and process should be well adapted and include outreach and impact. In case of calls with specific topics, they should be relevant to both North and South for more sustainability after the funding ends and to influence policymakers. The

emergence of research ecosystems in the global South should be supported to allow research systems to evolve independently. Additionally, the awareness of the thematic around "decolonising research funding" should be raised. Training on the topic could be provided to both, research funding staff and evaluators.

4   Recommendations

Recommendations to funders:

- Analyse and respond to the wish for longer funding periods and transdisciplinary research

- Reflect on eligibility and evaluation criteria (not the same criteria may be helpful for different funding schemes)

- Consult KFPE when establishing a new funding scheme

- Raise awareness on topic of "decolonising research funding" (staff and evaluators)

- Provide training on important elements of transdisciplinary research for staff and evaluators of schemes that fund transdisciplinary research

Recommendations to researchers:

- Consult KFPE principles

- Valorise research ideas and outcomes from partners

- Carefully check open calls and newsletters (KFPE, SNSF as well as www.research.swiss)

- Carefully read the available call information and contact the office for open questions.

Recommendations to KFPE :

- Promote and review the website www.research.swiss

- Contact SERI to ask if international funding possibilities could be added to the research.swiss

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