



“LE SAVOIR ET LE FAIRE”

DECOLONISATION AND GENEVA AS A THIRD WORLD DEVELOPMENT STUDIES HUB, C. 1961-1981

Researchers

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Description

Under the impression of decolonisation, the Swiss authorities in 1961 set up the Centre genevois pour la formation de cadres africains, later renamed Institut universitaire d'études du développement. Convinced that education was pivotal, IUED's ostensible purpose was to transmit Western values and thus contribute to the development of newly independent countries. Yet, the people that frequented IUED and Geneva defied its original purpose and made this place their own. For them, authors and activists like Fanon, Memmi, or Carmichael announced the need to radically rethink and re-imagine existing (developmental) paradigms. Thus, IUED would gain a reputation as a vibrant hub for various anti-colonial and anti-authoritarian activists e.g. linked to FRELIMO (Mozambique) or the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa. Along with countering what they deemed imperialist discourses at the International Organisations, they forged new solidarities with like-minded people across racial and national boundaries.

Additional information

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My project studies the people that populated IUED, their ideas and trajectories, and the socio-political context in which they worked. It explores what these histories can tell us about the larger meaning of decolonisation and development in this period. I argue that encounters and discussions with Third World thinkers and activists at IUED led to a de-centring of mainstream development ideas taught at IUED, and a questioning of their underlying Eurocentric assumptions. By examining an extensive and rich body of archival resources, including the oral history testimonies of former professors, staff, and students, the project weaves together social, intellectual and institutional histories.

