

MEMORY IN MOTION

Sites of Learning and Remembrance of Colonialism in Germany

How, what and—above all—whom we remember shapes ideas of belonging and non-belonging. Memory forms and manifests participation in the collective, and access to material and immaterial resources is granted and regulated accordingly. As a result, memory—or rather, what is not remembered—serves as a guide to identifying who can be excluded, rendered invisible or deliberately marginalized at the discursive, practical, and political levels. How a society remembers influences its view of itself as a whole, and of its individual members.

[transcript]

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GREETING

MERYEM CHOUKRI

At the start of the two-day closed workshop from January 26 to 28, 2023, at Community Space Eeden in Hamburg as part of Memory in Motion, Meryem Choukri welcomed the participants—national and international experts from the fields of science, art, architecture, and urban planning, as well as key players from institutions and civil society.

My name is Meryem Choukri and in the name of the Advisory Board of Decolonization of the city of Hamburg, I am very glad to welcome you all. While I am excited to speak in front of so many distinguished international experts in the field of decolonization and remembrance of colonialism, I am especially happy to greet my colleagues in the process of pushing for responsible remembrance here in Hamburg.

Therefore, I would like to welcome the working group Hamburg Postkolonial, represented here by Hanni Jokinen, Anke Schwarzer, and Madeline Danquah.

I would also like to acknowledge other members of the Board such as Aileen Puhlmann, Kodjo Valentin Glaeser, and Beatrice Angut Oola who are present today. I would have appreciated to see even more of my colleagues here, who have been and are still actively engaged in the processes of decolonization in Hamburg and Germany in general. I am confident we can find ways to include them in future meetings.

We have been debating responsible remembering of the colonial past in this city since before it was cool and trendy to engage with decolonization. This process was initiated decades ago by numerous Black, migrant, and people of colour initiatives, as well as by other civil society groups who have been working on a critical engagement with Germany's colonial history on a national, regional, and local level.

Decolonization is not a top-down process and should also not be an empty phrase. It's about more than installing a critical memorial plaque at the Bismarck statue. Decolonization was always led by the people; no ruling power voluntarily gives up their power. Therefore, any discussion about decolonization and the memory of colonialism must happen in dialogue with the civil society and especially with racialized people who need to be at the centre of these discussions. No place can be 'decolonized', without those who were and are still affected by racism and colonialism today. We need to listen to historically marginalized and oppressed people in order to appropriately remember Germany's past.

We must also not ignore the work that has been done on the grassroots level in specific local contexts. I understand that it might be difficult from an institutional standpoint to engage with various actors, organized in loose networks and groups. But I would like to point out here that this decentrality is a strength and not a weakness. To have any meaningful way

to engage with the colonial past, we have to include as many perspectives as possible. It's important that this dialogue takes place at eye level from the very beginning, because that's also a decisive factor in decolonization. What's more: it's the prerequisite for making this process credible and sustainable.

We all know decolonization is not an easy process. It is also not a marketing campaign. It is messy, uncomfortable work. But we do not engage with the past this intensely for the past's sake or to keep up the good image of Germany as 'Erinnerungsweltmeister'.¹ We tackle these historical injustices to slowly change a lingering colonial mindset. I and many others here do so to change the present and the future, to work towards a society where Black, brown, and other marginalized bodies can feel safe. This is not just about street names, this is absolutely existential.

Before coming to an end, let me reiterate three demands to the *Memory in Motion* network. These also reflect demands that have been expressed by the civil society in Hamburg:

1. I am well aware that this conference does not engage specifically with colonial remembrance in Hamburg. However, we are in Hamburg right now and this event was developed by institutional actors in Hamburg. Let us not forget where we are. Decolonial debates have a global history but are also embedded in local structures. Therefore, I greeted my fellow Hamburg activist first, for we would not meet here without their decade-long work in these fields.
2. In this sense, I urge you to try to include small local organizations and individuals, and especially Black, POC, migrant, and diasporic communities and grassroots organizations in the conversation. What might seem like a great idea at first glance to people that are not rooted in local debates can ignore ongoing discussions that we might not be aware of. Let us think together how we can include these voices in the work of this network during this conference but also in the future.
3. I hope that we can use this space to create a network of solidarity of different civic society actors, groups, artists, and academics working on decolonization and responsible remembering of the colonial past. In my vision, this network of solidarity would ideally not just learn from each other but also actively support each other in our respective local struggles for responsible remembering.

1 *Erinnerungsweltmeister* refers to how Germany has, in the past, been considered to be well versed with national memory work because of its institutionalized memory culture and commemoration of the Holocaust. In recent years, this narrative has fallen under increased scrutiny as Germany is only beginning to recognize its colonial atrocities.

Before passing the mic to Madeline Danquah, let me thank the curational team of *Memory in Motion* for their immense work. I and others saw how much work you put in, how difficult it was for you to move in those white institutional spaces while juggling different expectations and wishes for the conference and network all while resisting tokenism. Thank you to Nana Asafu-Adjei, Ibou Diop, Suy Lan Hopmann, Mèhèza Kalibani, Eric Otieno Sumba, and Iris Rajanayagam.

Thank you so much for your attention!

I am looking forward to engaging in conversations with you all over the next days!



MEMORY IN MOTION

BEATRACE ANGUT OOLA,
IRIS RAJANAYAGAM,
EMMANUEL ASARE,
MÈHÈZA KALIBANI,
ERIC OTIENO SUMBA,
IBOU COULIBALY DIOP

Indeed, one can say that memory has an ‘existential importance’ for groups and individuals. But while it shapes the present and the future, memory, the meanings of the past(s), and practices of remembering are, in turn, shaped by present contexts, desires, struggles, and aspirations. These are especially significant in contexts of past and continuing violence and inequalities, in the struggle for liberation and the right to self-determination, and in building the narrative of a nation where memory serves as a moral discourse and political tool.

*Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo*¹

How, what, and—above all—whom we remember shapes ideas of belonging and non-belonging and has immediate effects on how these ideas are negotiated within politics and society. Memories form and manifest participation in the collective. In conjunction, access to material and immaterial resources is granted, regulated, and distributed. Accordingly, memory—or that which is remembered or not remembered—provides orientation for the imaginations of those who are excluded from this collective, rendered invisible, or consciously marginalized, on both discursive and practical levels. How a society remembers also influences its view of itself as a whole, and of its individual members.

The culture of remembrance in Germany moves within a field of tension between processing the injustices of National Socialism—its central point of reference—and the demands of a changing society. At the same time, National Socialism’s colonial revisionism, the Socialist Unity Party’s anti-colonialism, and the history of the German Democratic Republic, show that plural culture(s) of remembrance require an engagement with different histories of entanglement and contexts of injustice.

Well into the 2000s, remembering Germany’s colonial histories of injustice and violence—and the associated dehumanization—was accorded very little importance in Germany (and in West Germany prior to that). Until then, the political landscape of remembrance was largely shaped by the denial and suppression of this history and its effects at both a local and global level. The term ‘colonial amnesia’ was frequently employed in this context. However, this pathologization of the phenomenon is not entirely

1 Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo, ‘The Past, Present, and Future Entangled: Memory-Work as Decolonial Praxis’, in *The Decolonial Enactments of Community Psychology*, ed. Shose Kessi, Mohammed Seedat, and Shahnaaz Suffla (Cham: Springer International, 2021), pp. 4.

adequate to describe a mechanism whose protagonists acted at times consciously and strategically, at times out of ignorance or indifference.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, transnational perspectives—and the awareness that German history needs to be viewed in a global context—have gained importance in public and political discourses. In parallel, a continual pluralization of society can be observed, which influences the culture and praxis of remembrance. It is against this background that we must view the subsequent efforts of the federal republic for the recognition and reassessment of colonialism, and the associated change in direction of the national politics of remembrance.² The shift described here is reflected not just discursively at the political and scientific level but also concretely in the ways resources are made available. Thus, at the national level, numerous projects, positions, and departments have been founded and developed, and both central and decentralized sites for learning about and remembering colonialism have been planned. In this context, the following was included in the last coalition agreement: ‘German colonial history imparts a special historical responsibility. Consequently, it is an important cultural–political concern of the federal government to critically engage with Germany’s colonial past, to strengthen international cooperation through dialogue with the countries and societies of origin based on partnership, and to return objects from a colonial context.’³

The Federal Foreign Office states: ‘Only those who know and reflect on their past can learn the lessons for the future and shape strong global partnerships. It is not just for this reason that the comprehensive reappraisal of Germany’s colonial past is an important theme for the Federal Government and Federal Foreign Office.’⁴ These developments must be viewed positively. These kinds of processes must be developed and accompanied at different levels to guarantee the necessary

- 2 On this subject, see: Sebastian Conrad, ‘Rückkehr des Verdrängten? Die Erinnerung an den Kolonialismus in Deutschland 1919–2019’, *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 27 September 2019, www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/297599/rueckkehr-des-verdraengten.
- 3 ‘Aufarbeitung des Kolonialismus’, Der Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien, accessed 17 October 2025, kulturstaatsministerin.de/aufarbeiten-und-erinnern/kolonialismus.
- 4 ‘Aufarbeitung der deutschen Kolonialvergangenheit’, *Auswärtiges Amt*, 7 June 2024, www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aamt/geschichte-des-auswaertigen-amts/2660906-2660906.

mechanisms of participation within the field of decolonization. They must integrate transnational perspectives and voices that are often excluded from discussions and negotiations—a point that has been repeatedly criticized, especially by civil society. This is where *Memory in Motion* comes in: by engaging with the plan to create sites of learning and remembrance for colonialism, the project has implemented formats that connect local and global dimensions and foster dialogue as a part of theoretical and practical reflection.

In January 2023, the first workshop for *Memory in Motion* was held in Hamburg. It was organized by the Historic Museums Foundation Hamburg, the Ministry of Culture and Media Hamburg, and the Advisory Council on the Decolonization of Hamburg in cooperation with the Federal Agency for Civic Education, Decolonize Berlin e. V., Decolonial Memory Culture in the City, and the Berlin City Museum Foundation. Fundamental questions on the development and establishment of sites of learning and remembrance for colonialism in Germany were discussed. Over three days, transnational and interdisciplinary conversations were held on different aspects and forms of post- and decolonial remembrance culture.

Building on these themes, a public event was held in Berlin in December 2024 that drew on the transnational working network on sites of education and memory related to colonialism in Germany. Experts from the fields of science, art, architecture, and urban planning, as well as central stakeholders from institutions and civil society, discussed the forms and content of the German colonialism. The event served as a space for an initial assessment of the two-year collaborative theoretical and working process on the themes of colonialism, coloniality, and decolonial cultures of remembrance. Ideas, visions, and utopian dreams were bundled, processed, and presented. Against the background of current debates on the politics of memory, a space was created in which the forms, content, emotions, and politics of decolonial remembrance could be reflected on and exchanged. As the project's title indicates, remembrance is understood here as a lived praxis—dynamic, multivalent, and constantly changing—encompassing both the remembrance of histories of colonial violence and injustice and histories of movement, as well as theories and practices of resistance. An important strand of the discussion focuses on the (abstract) sites where the work of remembrance takes place—or rather, the sites from which they are drawn and shaped.

Entangled and global historical approaches play a central role in addressing the project's theme. Events in colonial history are analysed in their specificity but also with respect to their interfaces, reciprocal determinations, and relationships. The relational lens is applied both to history itself and to the work and practices of remembrance, as well as to approaches to the conception and shaping of the site—that is, sites of remembrance. This theoretical and practical framework enables one to think beyond hegemonic classifications and divisions and to pay greater attention to intersectional dimensions.

The work of the participating activists, artists, practitioners, scientists, and mediators was guided by the assumption that a corresponding expansion of the political landscape of remembrance makes it possible to tell histories beyond national boundaries and situate them within a global context. As a result, both the interwoven nature of histories across geographical and temporal space and the aforementioned contextuality are made visible, enabling a culture of remembrance that can do justice to a continually changing and increasingly pluralistic society. The focus on these interdependencies and interfaces enables the colonially shaped contours of identity and community to be shifted, redefined, or dissolved, indicating paths for liberating them from rigid and essentializing categorizations and hierarchizations. Thinking through history and the way in which they are analysed, together beyond Eurocentric narratives, also opens up possibilities for imagining cross-community solidarities. The entangled historical approach of *Memory in Motion* thus provides momentum for the development of future narratives in a plural and democratic society. The anthropologist Rosa Castillo has succinctly defined the interactions that coalesce in a place of remembrance as the 'entanglement of memory and imagination, which are both evocative of ideas, emotion, and action. Imagination and memory are closely related.'⁵ Building on these considerations, a further important strand in the discussion addresses the design of concrete, material sites as spaces for activation, encounter, and coming together.

What can such places evoke on a physical, emotional, intellectual, affective, or even spiritual level? What function do these sites have? Where should they be located geographically? Who is imagined as the target group of visitors? How can such sites be designed concretely (also architecturally), and what is their relationship to their immediate environment? What should a topography of remembrance look like when it takes the plurality of society as its starting point and aims to do justice to its demands?

5 Castillo, 'The Past, Present, and Future Entangled'.

This publication appears at a time in which pressure on post- and decolonial perspectives is palpably increasing, both nationally and internationally. Approaches critical of colonialism are not only increasingly coming under attack, they are also being delegitimized and continually questioned. These developments are reflected in the intensification of racist discourses and a general increase in rhetoric hostile to migration. Amnesty International and experts from the United Nations point to the political and social discrediting of critical voices, even to the extent of criminalization, and warn of accompanying repressions.⁶

Globally, the engagement with colonial continuities and the resulting structures of violence and injustice is more necessary than ever. This underscores the urgent task of protecting and developing the discursive spaces of a diverse, decolonial-oriented civil society and scientific community. It is necessary to promote a differentiated culture of remembrance, grounded in solidarity, that unites the local and the global with analytical precision while recognizing their diversity.

Consequently, remembering does not only mean directing one's gaze to the past. It also involves engaging with continuities in colonial and imperialist structures and traditions of thought, as well as the associated dehumanization that continues to shape society, politics, and science, and that are clearly manifest in the current geopolitical situation. Against this backdrop, remembering means creating spaces in which analysis, exchange, learning, critique, and reflection are possible. This volume collects contributions from transdisciplinary experts who were involved in

6 Regarding the recent repression of voices expressing solidarity with Palestine and critiquing Israel's military operations, see: 'UN Experts Urge Germany to Halt Criminalisation and Police Violence Against Palestinian Solidarity Activism', *OHCHR*, 16 October 2025, www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/10/un-experts-urge-germany-halt-criminalisation-and-police-violence-against; and 'Einschränkung der Versammlungsfreiheit in Deutschland: "Jetzt ist der Moment, um aktiv zu werden"', *Amnesty International*, 13 November 2024, www.amnesty.de/aktuell/deutschland-proteste-palaestina-gaza-israel-einschraenkung-meinungsfreiheit-interview-rechtswissenschaftlerin-nahed-samour.

Memory in Motion. Here, they present their perspectives on building sites for learning about and remembering colonialism in Germany.

The perspectives presented in this publication demonstrate that continual exchange, alongside the active involvement and participation of transnational voices, is essential for establishing sites of learning and remembrance, as well as for fostering a thorough and genuine engagement with colonialism and its aftereffects in all their facets. This was a primary goal of *Memory in Motion*. We would like to extend our warm thanks to all those who contributed to the successful realization of this project and the compiling of this volume.



EMERGENCE

IRIS RAJANAYAGAM IN
CONVERSATION WITH
SUY LAN HOPMANN

Suy Lan Hopmann, a co-initiator of *Memory in Motion*, speaks with Iris Rajanayagam, a member of the curatorial team, about the project's development from 2021 to 2025.

IRIS RAJANAYAGAM: To start, I want to ask what you associate with the title *Memory in Motion*. What does it constitute for you? Or what, ideally, should it convey?

SUY LAN HOPMANN: *Memory in Motion* contains two central terms: remembrance and movement. For me, memory—in all its facets—means the work of remembrance, remembrance culture, individual and collective remembrance. It's never completed, but a process that needs to be continually renegotiated.

And then there is motion. For me, motion means starting out—the initial energy generated when something gets into gear, when people come together in order to change something. At the same time, motion stands for the steady, the slow, that which keeps flowing. It is not just about starting something but also about extending it, keeping it alive, carrying it forward. For me, that is the core of *Memory in Motion*. Grasping memory as something that remains in motion—something that is moved and sets others in motion. Remembrance is not something that happens on its own. It needs people who carry it, develop it further, and repeatedly bring it into the present.

IRIS: In 2021, you were one of the co-initiators of *Memory in Motion*. What were your initial thoughts during the project's conception phase? How did the idea for it come about?

SUY LAN: A lot happened during that time. The actual starting point for *Memory in Motion* was the decision by the newly elected federal government to finally create a site of learning and remembrance on the theme of colonialism. This marked the first time that decades of civil-society and scholarly work in this field was recognized as part of German history—and that one had to assume political responsibility in order to continue this work. I joined the Department for Culture and the Media in October 2021 in the first position—certainly at the state level and probably even nationwide—within a government agency explicitly dedicated to colonial history. The post was temporary, and Bundestag elections were taking place that

autumn. When I began the job, it was unclear whether there would even be this new federal government, let alone the decision to establish a site of learning and remembrance. It was only later that this undertaking was included in the coalition agreement.

I quickly realized that hardly anyone with the relevant expertise was working at the Department for Culture and the Media. This was partly because my post was the only one of its kind. And so I asked myself: Who should actually promote this topic within government agencies in Germany? At the same time, I was aware that my post was temporary—like so many things in politics. I hadn't planned to remain in public administration in the long term; instead, I wanted to use this particular situation to set something in motion.

From my previous work—both at MARKK (Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt) and in activist and civil-society contexts—I knew that many people in Germany had been working on colonial history and remembrance culture for years and even decades. The expertise was there—it just had to be brought together. So I posed the question of how these people could be connected and how they might collectively generate recommendations or proposals that really emerge from praxis and experience—not from the outside.

Before officially starting at the agency, I attended the second 'Decolonial Festival', where I had initial conversations with Nadja Ofuatey-Alazard and Christian Kopp about how Hamburg and Berlin could strengthen their cooperation. That was the pre-pre-history, so to speak. Shortly afterwards, I spoke with Eric Otieno Sumba, whom I immediately saw as the ideal person to develop an initial concept and build a network.

However, it took a long time for funds to be approved and political decisions to be made. From the outset, it was clear to us that an initiative like this had to be supported at numerous levels—by both the federal and state governments. During this phase, I spoke with many different people, including Nicola Lauré al-Samarai, who eventually connected with you and Peggy Piesche at the Federal Agency for Civic Education. At the same time, new departments and posts were being created in many places—many of

which have since been restructured or dismantled. Finally, there were the conversations between you and me, and then Ibou Diop from Dekoloniale Memory Culture in the City was brought in. That's how our team of four came together: you, Ibou Diop, Eric Otieno Sumba, and me.

IRIS: Since then, *Memory in Motion I* was held in Hamburg in January 2023, followed by *Memory in Motion II* in Berlin in December 2024. One initial outcome of these two events is this publication. Although you were not involved in organizing *Memory in Motion II*, you participated as an invited guest and contributed to shaping its content. How would you describe the development from *Memory in Motion I* to *Memory in Motion II*? And in your view, how can this work be continued?

SUY LAN: *Memory in Motion* was initially conceived for a more closed circle of people from which working groups would later emerge. Over time, however, the project has opened up considerably—which I see as a major gain. Today, many more people are involved, the range of perspectives has broadened, and the initiative as a whole has a broader base. There is currently a strong focus on Hamburg and Berlin, which was not the initial intention, as we initially wanted to work on a national level. However, the expansion in terms of both content and participants marks an important step forward.

What I find especially pleasing is that, in the second event, protagonists from local civil society played a much stronger role. People were not just invited to participate but really shaped the process. During the first run, there were still many representatives from public administrative offices, partly because the project was closely tied to the Department of Culture at the time, and my own position there served as a kind of hub. I see this shift towards local civil society as a very positive development. From the beginning, my aim was to loosen these processes from the political level in order to give them greater autonomy.

At the same time, I still consider it important to remain in dialogue with the public authorities—for example, when it comes to structural issues or questions of funding. However, what is decisive is that the momentum, the direction in terms of content, and the design come from civil society. For the second meeting, I would've liked to have seen a stronger presence of representatives from politics and administration in a listening role even if they weren't actively involved or officially invited, but motivated

by a genuine interest in what was happening here. For me, such forms of listening—being present without actively participating—are an expression of a shifting landscape of remembrance culture, one in which the focus is not only on talking but also on perceiving and supporting.

IRIS: The question of broader social change in relation to cultures of remembrance is one of the issues we addressed in our preliminary conversation. *Memory in Motion* took place at a time when a number of shifts in remembrance politics and culture could be observed, both in Germany and internationally. Parallel to, or intertwined with, these developments, right-wing or right-wing extremist tendencies were increasing in Germany and beyond. In this context, then as now, post- and decolonial approaches and research—particularly but not just from right-wing voices—have increasingly come under public scrutiny. They continue to be harshly criticized and even attacked. I want to go into this in more detail later.

First, however, let's move beyond the sociopolitical. Both *Memory in Motion I* and *Memory in Motion II* faced additional challenges, which can be traced back to conceptional considerations, and to some extent, to gaps within them. Many of the questions that emerged during *Memory in Motion I* were raised by international guests. Primarily, there was a lack of clarity and a confusion regarding their role in the process, as well as questions about where the initiative should lead in concrete terms. What challenges do you see, especially in regard to transferring between sometimes highly localized concerns and broader global or transnational discourses? In your view, what are the pitfalls, and what preconditions are necessary for success in this context?

SUY LAN: You mean the relationship between the local and the global?

IRIS: Correct. For us, the transnational perspective was decisive, as it was frequently not taken into account in the development of, and exchange on, cultures of remembrance in Germany. To counteract this, we very consciously included voices from formerly colonized regions. It was precisely this that was criticized by local civil society: 'Our voices are continually being ignored, and now expensive international guests are being invited.' In addition, there were local discourses, disputes, and conflicts; in my opinion, bringing this all together was no easy task.

SUY LAN: The first session was clearly conceived as a working meeting. The format consisted of small, closed spaces, short inputs, and ample room for exchange, with the idea that working groups would emerge and continue the work afterwards. In contrast, *Memory in Motion II* clearly had much more the character of an open event—one attended, listened to different contributions and workshops, and could participate without having to become actively involved.

For me, there are two answers to the question of how things should proceed. The first concerns something very specific to Hamburg, though it can also be applied to other cities. Local civil society actors who have been working for years with very different emphases and perspectives were long overlooked, which has led to a certain mistrust of official institutions and political bodies. So, when funding suddenly becomes available and international guests are invited, the question quickly becomes: ‘Why aren’t we a part of this? Why weren’t we included?’ This dynamic was especially apparent in Hamburg, but I believe it is a fundamental problem in many cities. In my opinion, the criticism of the closed character of the first meeting was less about its content and more about these structural experiences.

As before, the question for me regarding the site of learning and remembrance is the relationship between local struggles and transnational exchange. When we say that a site of learning and remembrance for colonialism should be established—whether in Hamburg, Berlin, or elsewhere—then it makes sense to begin with local conditions and with specific histories anchored in these places. Maybe this stems from my many years of work in the museum sector, but I am convinced that places themselves carry meaning. Even when history can no longer be directly read in the architecture, a trace of it remains in the space. Being in a specific place, knowing what happened there, and learning something about the history on site is different from just engaging with it digitally or abstractly.

At the same time, such places are never isolated. They are connected, they are in motion, and they appear in the histories of people who have moved away from the place or arrived there. These interconnections can be told from a concrete point—one has to start somewhere for a story to unfold. For me, this is precisely where the connection between the local and the transnational lies, as well as the necessity of keeping this exchange alive.

IRIS: The fact that invitations are extended to international guests to speak about themes such as colonialism, decolonialism, racism, and critiques of racism—while local protagonists who have perhaps worked for thirty years or more on these issues with limited resources are overlooked or neglected—is a phenomenon I have frequently observed in Germany. I think a decisive factor here is the process of externalization, which creates a certain distance and thus makes such voices less ‘dangerous’ or ‘threatening’ to hegemonic discourses and narratives. In turn, local voices are easier to contain. Established and prominent international guests are invited—which is naturally very important—but at the same time no attention is paid to ‘one’s own doorstep’, so to speak.

The transnational perspective can provide a helpful external momentum when local discourses begin to circle or repeat themselves. It is helpful to see that the discourse has moved forward or is simply different in other places, depending on the context. At the same time, it is naturally important to establish a connection to the specific local discourse so that such impulses can contribute to reflections and further developments in this context.

SUY LAN: Now I would like to ask you a question. In 2023, after *Memory in Motion I*, I left the cultural department and withdrew from the project. So, I would be interested to hear how you perceived the subsequent development of *Memory in Motion*.

The project’s beginnings coincided with a phase in remembrance politics in which many things were moving at once. On the one hand, we can look back at significant gains, which were largely achieved by civil society and subsequently taken up by politics: new positions, long-term projects on colonial

reappraisal, and the decision of the federal government to establish a site of learning and remembrance for colonialism.

At the same time, one could see a clear shift in the public discourse that increasingly questioned decolonial and post-colonial approaches. When Otieno and I discussed the conception for *Memory in Motion* in 2022, we were concerned that the theme could be attacked or politically instrumentalized. The Achille Mbembe debate from 2020 was still recent, the documenta fifteen controversy about anti-Semitism in the cultural field erupted during the preparations for *Memory in Motion I*, and post-colonial studies were at the centre of polarized public discussions.

Against this background, I would be interested to know: How did you see these developments, and how did they influence the subsequent conceptual considerations for *Memory in Motion II*?

IRIS: In my opinion, the increased delegitimization of decolonial and post-colonial approaches has been apparent in the local context for several years. Now, however, especially since 7 October 2023, it has significantly intensified, and so has its reverberations. Sebastian Conrad has provided a vivid description and analysis of this development in his recent article ‘Postkoloniale Theorie und Antisemitismus’. In the curatorial text of this book, we also discuss how, in the context of these attacks on the field, racist narratives are perpetuated, anti-migration discourses are promoted, and, relatedly, critical voices from academia and civil society—currently, and with greater frequency, those expressing solidarity with Palestine or speaking out against Israel’s military operations, which numerous scholars and human-rights organizations classify as a genocide—are discredited, silenced, or in some cases even criminalized.

In the 2000s, awareness of the necessity to increasingly engage with and reappraise German colonialism and its ongoing impact began to grow within politics and society—reappraisal not in the sense of overcoming and forgetting, but an actual reappraisal with a view towards possible compensatory justice. Major momentum was provided by the Black Lives Matter movement, which opened doors, spaces, and possibilities, and above all, made resources available. Something changed within Germany’s remembrance-politics landscape as a result. Today, the reality is different.

Despite the developments outlined above, my impression is that the idea for *Memory in Motion* was developed at the tail end of a period in 2021 in which a discourse was still barely possible. There was, however, a potential (though diminishing) openness for the theme in all its facets—for example, in relation to plural cultures of remembrance,

entangled historical approaches, and relational remembrance—concepts and approaches that were central for *Memory in Motion I*. A space had opened up for an entangled historical approach in which questions could be considered and discussed, such as ‘What is remembered and what not? How are histories of violence and injustice interconnected? What are the specificities and points of intersection?’ This was reflected in the range of guests we invited and the themes we selected.

What role did the ideas of relational remembrance and entangled, global-historical approaches play for you in the conception of *Memory in Motion*, particularly in relation to questions of cross-community solidarities?

SUY LAN: From the beginning, entangled historical and intersectional approaches have been at the centre of our work. They form the core of our understanding of history and shaped the processes we implemented in *Memory in Motion*. It is precisely against this background that, regretfully, we must acknowledge the absence of explicitly queer-feminist perspectives in *Memory in Motion I* and *II*. Since then, they have been discussed, and during the concluding session of *Memory in Motion II* they were explicitly addressed, although overall they were not sufficiently integrated.

IRIS: There was a lot of discussion about whether the site should be decentralized or partially digital. There was also extensive discussion about its target audience. But what particularly interests me is how such a site of learning and remembrance can also become a cross-community space—in other words, a space where cross-community structures can develop and be strengthened. Isidora Randjelović has written about memorial sites as living spaces where exchange takes place and which visitors can interact with. How do you imagine a site of learning and remembrance for colonialism that enables and reinforces cross-community solidarities or solidarity structures?

SUY LAN: I believe that the global-historical, entangled, and intersectional approaches I mentioned earlier are fundamental—not just for how we understand history but also for how we treat one another as a community. They create the conditions that make cross-community solidarity possible in the first place, because they establish a common ground from

which we can approach one another. Even in areas where we share few common experiences, there are points of contact that facilitate mutual understanding. This requires a mindset that places intersectionality at the centre and recognizes the interrelations.

A similar thing applies to the site itself. I still believe the original programme posed central questions that can be built on. One of these questions concerned the function of the site. We had already defined several functions back then, and in fact many of them are also reflected in *Memory in Motion*. Learning is part of the concept—and learning means encounter. At the same time, it is about remembrance, research, and making different experiences tangible at a specific place. Thus, a common basis is established in order to enter into dialogue.

That is why it is so important to start with the site itself, and from there to think through the interconnections, both thematically and spatially. It would also be exciting to strengthen communication with people from museums and memorials, as well as with protagonists involved in monument conservation or urban planning who design and operate such sites. The architecture, the art, the aesthetics of a site, the people, the offerings, the access to histories, books, films, or archives—all of this shapes how a site is experienced. From my perspective, how this is all realized in a space remains central, and it is worthwhile to continue to explore this.

IRIS: I find the question of the archive very exciting, especially with regard to so-called transformative archives—in other words, archives that disrupt conventional forms of documentation and presentation of history, and thus the manufacture of history. Maybe this site of remembrance could, amongst other things, serve as

a place where marginalized knowledge is archived and transformative archives established.

In conclusion, I would like to pose the obvious question: At this moment in time, considering the current political and social situation, how do you see the perspectives for the actual establishment of a site, or several sites, of learning and remembrance for colonialism in Germany? What are your wishes in this respect?

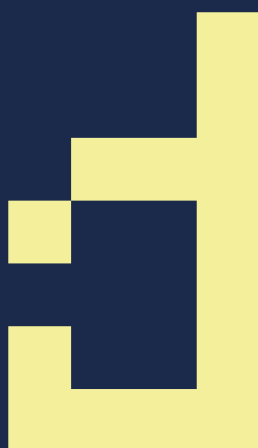
SUY LAN: My wish is that people have the energy to carry on, or that we succeed in repeatedly generating places where we can draw on this energy, or share it with one another. Ultimately, it is individuals and groups that set such processes in motion—and here we are back with the theme of motion that we began with. The central point is coming together. Developing joy and energy, telling one another what is important. Sometimes this happens behind the scenes, with few resources; sometimes it involves large institutions, good resources, money. That is nice, but what remains decisive is that we come together. Movement stops when we stop meeting one another.

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

REFLECTION

LEC-

SS



THE NAMA / OVAHERERO
GENOCIDE

Memory as Experienced by Descendants of
Victims and Re-Traumatizing Interpretations
of Perpetrator Descendants

S I M A L U I P E R T

In present-day Namibia, the German colonial period in what was then German South West Africa is often narrated as a brief spell, without giving due consideration to how this period has remarkably shaped present-day Namibia and its legal, economic, political, and social landscape, which now forms the foundational premise of Namibia's governance. The official narrative in Namibia has also used the prolonged, oppressive Apartheid era to bury the memory of German colonial brutality, forgetting that Germany laid the firm foundation for racial oppression and institutional dispossession that was continued by the Apartheid regime. In Germany itself, remembrance of the Holocaust occupies the largest place in the culture of remembrance and commemoration, not least because of the industrial scale of the deliberate mass murder. Other extreme forms of state violence must also be brought into public consciousness.

In the case of the Nama and Ovaherero genocide, memory culture has largely been dictated by Eurocentric narratives. Throughout the German and South African colonial period, the mass murder of Nama and Ovaherero communities was interpreted and therefore justified as self-defence against rebellious natives by the educational systems of settler communities.

Descendants of white German and white South African settlers have always maintained that their fore-bearers bought the land they continue to occupy today, discarding the historical fact that the land was expropriated by both racist colonial regimes from Africans through means of genocide, racializing policies, and legal systems. This false narrative continues to be reproduced today through a racialized European lens that foregrounds the experiences and interpretation of perpetrator descendants at the expense of the experiences and interpretation of the descendants of the victims.

This is especially evident in the outcome of the negotiation process between the German and Namibian governments, which was concluded in 2021 with a German financial gesture of reconciliation but no legally binding reparations. What comes through vividly about the German colonial period as one of its profound consequences is how the economic and resource plunder of the

colony led to what seems to be an unbridgeable memory gap between those who were beneficiaries and victims of colonization. Therefore, in the outcome from 2021—widely referred to as the Joint Declaration though it has not yet been ratified—the legal obligations of Germany towards the Nama and Ovaherero people are denied, and the voices and memory of the descendants are suppressed through the false illusion of community consultations and token representation where a state-authority rather than the directly affected communities have the final say.

In recent short forensic documentaries created by Nama and Ovaherero victim descendants about the genocide, in collaboration with Forensic Architecture and Forensis (Goldsmiths University of London), the communities reconstruct the horrors of the German colonial period through their own memory and experience. When juxtaposed with the content of the negotiation process outcome of the two governments, it becomes clear how the erasure of this vivid memory as experienced by descendants of victims has a re-traumatizing effect. Celebrating the outcomes of the process is itself traumatizing for the descendants as it is experienced as invalidating the memory and experiences of the Nama and Ovaherero person specifically, and community more generally. Equally it is reducing the impact of reparations to a mere voluntary development aid—a slap in the face to the ordinary Nama and Ovaherero person. It is further traumatic and rather violent on the part of the Namibian cabinet to approve a document that insults its own citizens.

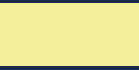
Shark Island, like many other similar places in Namibia where German imperialists established extermination and concentration camps, are places of tragedy and unparalleled human suffering. Yet this memory is only known through the work of the affected communities. The effort of the Nama and Ovaherero people, who by default have become human rights activists by birth, is a perspective from which the memory work emerges that earnestly considers the atrocities as well as the lasting, transgenerational, and inherited impact on Nama and Ovaherero communities as well. One would hope that the emergence of these memories will lead to a new historiography and a decolonized knowledge production that is less tainted by biases of current scholarship in the field: that these memories will give due consideration to the psycho-social factors

derived from lived experiences of German colonialism, precisely because these experiences have profoundly shaped the psychological conditions and social agency of the Nama and Ovaherero people.

Such community-centred, Afrocentric knowledge production will go a long way in addressing the present conditions of the descendant communities, conditions which are largely a product of their colonial history. The real work should be to heal the wounds and stigma, and improve people's current living conditions in every respect in light of the enormous losses they have suffered, i.e., their psychological well-being, access to services, their political voice and access to power which has been demographically destroyed by the genocide, their economic ability to satisfy their material needs, and their right to access the very natural resources and assets brutally stripped away from them through German colonial savagery.

Community-centred memory will add significant value to the process of decolonizing memory and the way memory is transmitted. If the German and Namibian governments had truly respected the knowledge, memory, and trans-generational experiences of the Nama and Ovaherero people, the bilateral negotiations would not be the lost opportunity they have now become. It is therefore important to put effort into overcoming the biases of scientific disciplines dominated by bodies of knowledge anchored in the Global North. African collective knowledge must provide clues to our joint past and how we have evolved, and such information must help us examine our stories and enable us to develop an awareness about ourselves. Western and Eurocentric civilization has greatly contaminated the traditional value systems of Africans. African ancestry had established, well before colonialism, a pattern of home-grown political systems and governance processes. They ensured there was progression in the pace and dynamics of our own civilization, such as in Great and Little Namakhoeland, as well as a self-styled tempo of technological development.

It is encouraging to observe that new networks of people of African descent, though often being defunded, are doing rounds in the community of social movement literature and working on ontological pluralism which highlights the costly and inherited psychological impact of colonialism upon both the colonizer and the colonized. These critiques and this memory activism envisions a future of global racial equality and equity through transformative and redistributive socio-economic, political, and legal systems in order to project a world beyond the white imperial gaze that continues to deny the significance of the knowledge systems of the Global South. We must cultivate new knowledge systems that transcend rather than authorize and reproduce imperialistic ways of knowledge because the future of memory work depends on it.



REMEMBERING AS
RADICAL INCLUSION

MAISHA AUMA

In this short contribution, I sketch three reflexive impulses for conceptualizing learning, remembrance, and commemoration critical of colonialism in hyper-diverse, post-migrant societies. The text is being written at a time of growing socio-political polarization in which geopolitical conflicts over the division of resources, national and global power regimes, and neo-imperialist ambitions are superimposed on struggles for gender rights and fears over the preservation of democratic structures. The key questions for our keynote speech, formulated in the run-up to the symposium *Memory in Motion II*, reflect this search for clarity with respect to struggles over interpretation, the politics of history, and remembrance cultures:

1. What implications arise from a decisively global-historical, decentralized perspective on colonial history, and what meaning does it have for decolonial remembrance praxis as well as (decentralized) sites of learning and remembrance?
2. What specific function could, or should, a (central) site of learning and remembrance for colonialism assume within German commemorative culture?
3. How should this central site of learning and remembrance about colonialism position itself in relation to other sites—nationally or transnationally—and how might it generate intersectional connections, including through its design and material form?
4. In which and whose present would such a site intervene in, whether conceived centrally or decentrally?
5. Who remembers where, and whom or what is remembered? For whom is this site designed, and what does it stand for? What do we need to unlearn, which forms of praxis must we pursue in greater depth, and which methods and theories support this process?¹

1 These key questions were provided to us in advance by Minu Haschemi Yekani, the moderator of our keynote speech at *Memory in Motion II*, titled 'Theorien und Methoden dekolonialer Erinnerungspraktiken: Intersektionale und globalgeschichtliche Ansätze im Kontext eines Lern- und Erinnerungsortes Kolonialismus', Haus der Kulturen der Welt, December 2024.

In this text, I place a special emphasis on the fifth question: I take up Anna Yeboah's introductory thoughts from the Dekoloniale Festival 'The Culture of Remembrance in the City of Berlin'. She opened by formulating an urgent appeal: democratic institutions carry the responsibility for actively shaping sites of remembrance instead of consigning them to obscurity or commercialization. In particular, Yeboah pointed to the Wilhelmstraße remembrance site—the historical location of the Berlin Congo Congress of 1884/85 (and the Imperial Colonial Office)—whose proposed use as a site of decolonial learning and commemoration is threatened by a lack of political support. At the time of the symposium, financing for the site had been withdrawn and there were no concrete plans from the Berlin state government or responsible federal ministry for preserving it as a site to learn about and remember German colonialism. Instead, the site is threatened by commercial development—a bitter setback for the efforts to dig where we stand, to paraphrase the author Sven Lindqvist.²

My contribution is arranged in three sections. In the first, I question the normalizing power of concepts of the conventional archive, remembrance, and commemoration, and call for a radically inclusive perspective that exposes the marginalized geopolitics and body politics found in these concepts while strengthening counter-hegemonic narratives. In the second

section, I reflect on the material foundations of radically inclusive remembrance practices. My focus is on how geopolitical and body-political diversity in learning, remembrance, and commemoration can be strengthened through collectively oriented historical work as well as through archival practices critical of social and power relations. The third and final section explores how radically inclusive conceptions can be sustained over the long term—whether through investment in sustainable structures or the institutionalization of colonial critique.

A. QUESTIONING THE NORMALIZING POWER OF CONVENTIONAL ARCHIVES

Remembrance and commemoration are concepts closely tied to the questions of who controls the management of sources, documentation, and archives, who collects and curates archival material, and which narratives are subsequently legitimized and normalized.³

- 2 See: Sven Lindqvist, 'Grabe, wo Du stehst: Die "Barfußhistoriker" in Schweden', in *Demokratie und Arbeitergeschichte. Jahrbuch 3* (1983): 9–13; see also: Sven Lindqvist, *Grabe, wo du stehst: Handbuch zur Erforschung der eigenen Geschichte* (Bonn: Dietz, 1989).
- 3 Brenda Nyandiko Sanya and Anne Namatsi Lutomia, 'Archives and Collective Memories: Searching for African Women in the Pan-African Imaginary', *Feminist Africa* 20 (2015), 69–76.

Conventional archives—from national libraries to state museums—are selective and structurally exclusive. They frequently privilege dominant historiographies while concealing marginalized perspectives.

Criticism of Elite-Based Historical Cultures and the Coloniality of Archives

As Brenda Nyandiko Sanya and Anne Namatsi Lutomia emphasize in their 2015 article ‘Archives and Collective Memories’, ‘Conventional history-making privileges dominant narratives and silences marginalized others.’⁴ Constructions of history produced by the dominant society tend to reproduce hegemonic narratives, while alternative perspectives and readings of the social world are excluded. Archives are not just stores of knowledge but also instruments of institutional power that stipulate what is considered historically worthy and what not.⁵ The colonial dimension of archives is not only displayed in the choice of what is collected, but also in the manner in which knowledge is organized, made accessible, marginalized, or consciously excluded. Conventional archives grant disproportionate space and visibility to privileged groups—especially those with social, political, or economic power. Women, LGBTQIA+ people, the working class, and groups rendered vulnerable by racism and their contributions to social development are frequently disregarded.⁶ Instead, state-recognized politics of history and archives continue to stabilize hegemonic narratives.

Archives are therefore not just neutral sites of preservation; rather, they are epistemic regimes that normalize individual forms of knowledge often aligned with specific interests while delegitimizing others.⁷ Normative archives—libraries, museums, daily newspapers, and news channels, as well as scientific journals and curricula—function as restricted and restrictive instruments. They generate a distorted and often incomplete picture of society that further cements existing power relations. Control of archives remains in the hands of groups that already enjoy social privilege and that centralize sovereignty over the interpretation of history.⁸

4 Sanya and Lutomia, ‘Archives and Collective Memories’, 70.

5 See: Johanna Heide, ‘Archiv’, in *Gender Glossar*, 2020, gender-glossar.de/a/item/104-archiv.

6 See: Awino Okech, ‘African Feminist Epistemic Communities and Decoloniality’, in ‘Decolonizing African Studies’, eds. Shose Kessi, Zoe Marks, and Elewani Ramugondo, *Critical African Studies* 12/3 (2020), 313–29; see also: OluTimehin Adegbeye, ‘Who Belongs in a City’, *TED*, August 2017, www.ted.com/talks/olutimehin_adegeye_who_belongs_in_a_city.

7 See: Sanya and Lutomia, ‘Archives and Collective Memories’; and Maisha M. Auma, Katja Kinder, and Peggy Piesche, ‘Kontrapunktische Studien zu Schwarzsein und Schwarzem Europa: Das Schwarze queer-feministische Magazin Afrekete als Wissensarchiv’, *Femina Politica: Zeitschrift für feministische Politikwissenschaft* 2 (2021), 106–19.

8 Heide, ‘Archiv’.

Radically Inclusive Remembrance Concepts as a Contrapuntal Counter-Strategy

A decolonial praxis of remembrance must be radically inclusive. It must not rely solely on existing archival logics but actively serve the perspectives of marginalized groups.⁹ Subaltern historiographies are not just supplementary; rather, they are decisive for a critical engagement with past and present.¹⁰ A decolonial historical praxis cannot simply wait for institutional reform. Collectively organized history groups, history movements, and local history workshops emerge in opposition to elite-driven constructions of history.¹¹ Such archiving documents social struggles, practices of resistance, and marginalized narratives, for example through digital networking activities. They are not just repositories of documents but living sites for the production of knowledge about resilience.¹²

B. MOVEMENT-BASED ARCHIVES AND THEIR ARCHIVING PRACTICES

The historical traces of themes of interest to citizens are looked for on one's own doorstep: street names, cemeteries, village squares, railway stations. The everyday and the familiar can thus be questioned with respect to migration, post-colonial entanglements, queer life worlds, and ecological developments.¹³

9 Auma, Kinder, and Piesche, 'Kontrapunktische Studien'.

10 See: Alfred G. Frei, 'Geschichte aus den "Graswurzeln"? Geschichtswerkstätten in der historischen Kulturarbeit', *APuZ* 2 (1988), www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/archiv/534341/geschichte-aus-den-graswurzeln-geschichtswerkstaetten-in-der-historischen-kulturarbeit/; Corinna Bittner and Lukas Doil, 'Für eine neue Geschichte von unten: Utopia. Die Zukünfte der Geschichtswissenschaft', *L.I.S.A. Wissenschaftsportal, Gerda Henkel Stiftung*, 24 August 2023, lisa.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/visiongeschichte_bittner_doil.

11 Bittner and Doil point to the important contribution of local initiatives who dedicate themselves to the establishment and maintenance of regional archives. They function as a corrective to the praxis of historicization as a 'well-meaning elite project'. See: Bittner and Doil, 'Für eine Geschichte von unten'. See also: Okech, 'African Feminist Epistemic Communities and Decoloniality'.

12 See: Maisha M. Auma, Katja Kinder, and Peggy Piesche, *Rassismus, Rassismuskritik und Resilienz* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2024); Kemi Fatoba, 'Die Initiative Adefra zeigt Schwarzen Frauen* in Deutschland, was Mut bedeutet', www.vogue.de/lifestyle/artikel/interview-adebra-frauen-die-mut-zeigen.

13 Bittner und Doil, 'Für eine neue Geschichte von unten'.

The history-workshop movement of the 1970s, in accordance with Sven Lindqvist's motto 'Dig where you stand', followed the idea of site-specificity. Accordingly, history is not just documented, it is collectively uncovered and realized.¹⁴ One's own situatedness and one's own embedding in the socio-regional structure becomes the starting point for a search for historical traces. Second-wave feminists took up this situated approach, expanding it to include intersectional, class-critical perspectives.¹⁵ Inspired by feminism, activists understood archival work as more than the mere preservation of historical evidence; they saw it as a political praxis aimed at making marginalized narratives visible. This tradition of knowledge and archive formation was further developed by queer movements as well as by decolonial, intersectional, and anti-racism movements. These groups developed resilient, collective practices that challenged and shifted hegemonic knowledge regimes.¹⁶

These movements' archives are understood as a counter-model or corrective to institutional archives. They not only criticize the absence of multiple perspectives in official archive material and collections, but they also intervene in the archive landscape through their insights into entangled histories.¹⁷ They adopt participative, collective, and experience-based approaches to documentation.¹⁸ By consciously collecting and curating marginalized narratives and making them available, they actively contribute to the democratization of historiography.¹⁹ The archival materials jointly collected, sorted, and evaluated by activists engaged in commemorative practices often pass a lower threshold than official archives. Household account books, photo albums, event flyers, posters, and correspondence and letters from (former) protagonists—from groups impacted by racism on both sides of the Berlin Wall before and after it fell in 1989—are more numerous and enjoy a different status in the private archives of anti-racist initiatives than in official archives.²⁰ This work again makes clear that archiving is

14 Frei, 'Geschichte aus den "Graswurzeln"?'; Bittner und Doil, 'Für eine neue Geschichte von unten'.

15 See: Helga Grubitzsch, 'Frauen machen Geschichte: Aspekte einer feministischen Geschichtsforschung', in *Geschichte entdecken: Erfahrungen und Projekte der neuen Geschichtsbewegung*, eds. Hannes Heer und Volker Ullrich (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1985), 150–64.

16 Heer and Ulrich, *Geschichte entdecken*; and Okech, 'African Feminist Epistemic Communities and Decoloniality'.

17 See: Auma M. Maisha, Eric Otieno Sumba, and Peggy Piesche, "'Reclaiming Our Time" in African Studies: Conversations from the Perspective of the Black Studies Movement in Germany', *Journal of Critical African Studies* 12/3 (2020), 330–53.

18 Fatoba, 'Die Initiative Adefra'.

19 Heide, 'Archiv'.

20 Frei, 'Geschichte aus den "Graswurzeln"?'; De-Zentralbild: Migrant:innen in der DDR, dezentralbild.net/de/; DOMiD – Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland, domid.org/news/vertragsarbeit-in-der-ddr/.

not a neutral act but can either stabilize existing power relationships or call them into question. Particularly in community-based research and practice, archival praxis is not restricted to collecting and categorization but also shapes social debates. Collectively managed archives and history workshops function as spaces of knowledge production in which alternative forms of remembrance are generated. Their initiators—often unpaid activists or locally situated groups—carry out fundamental socially transformative work by experimenting with new forms of archiving and challenging traditional concepts of historiography.²¹

Activist archiving initiatives are important for the deconstruction of hegemonic archives. Informal archives or digitally networked collections often arise from the necessity of safeguarding marginalized memories from disappearance.²² Many of these archives are stored in cellars or private households, or are maintained by independent initiatives.²³ This archival work goes beyond historical reconstruction: it is part of a political strategy of resistance against epistemic violence and hegemonic forms of knowledge production.²⁴ Movement-based archives thus play a decisive role in the diversification and decolonization of archival landscapes. They consciously preserve the histories and memories of groups that are underrepresented, or not represented at all, in academic or state archives.²⁵ At the same time, they often find themselves in precarious situations, both spatially and institutionally.²⁶ Through their choice of themes

21 Auma, Kinder, and Piesche, 'Kontrapunktische Studien'.

22 Bittner und Doil, 'Für eine neue Geschichte von unten'; Fatoba, 'Die Initiative Adefra'.

23 Bittner und Doil, 'Für eine neue Geschichte von unten'.

24 Auma, Kinder, and Piesche, 'Kontrapunktische Studien'; Fatoba, 'Die Initiative Adefra'.

25 Heide, 'Archiv'; Bittner and Doil, 'Für eine neue Geschichte von unten'.

26 Diane Izabiliza, 'Afrekete. Zeitschrift für Afrodeutsche und Schwarze Frauen', in *FFBIZ. Das feministische Archiv*, accessed on 19 February 2025, www.das-feministische-archiv.de/wir-haben-sie-noch-alle/afrekete-zeitung-fuer-afro-deutsche-und-schwarze-frauen; see also: Bittner und Doil, 'Für eine neue Geschichte von unten'.

and participative methods, archives of movements provide an alternative horizon to archive structures shaped by dominance.²⁷ They legitimize forms of knowledge that are marginalized or devalued in traditional archives, including oral testimonies, performances, and alternative media formats.²⁸ This gives rise to independent, often non-state-organized knowledge landscapes that not only document marginalized histories but also actively intervene in social negotiation processes.²⁹

Afrekete as an Archive of a Movement

We see the archive as a location for women to document their lived experiences, and we argue that archiving has great potential to build more inclusive records, histories, and also futures, bringing the ‘margin to the centre’.³⁰

An impressive example of a movement-based archive is the Black queer-feminist magazine *Afrekete*, published in Germany between 1988 and 1990.³¹ *Afrekete* functioned as a shared knowledge archive for Afro-German/Black women and lesbians and, over the course of six issues, documented intersectional, anti-racist, and power-critical perspectives that were generally overlooked or systematically marginalized in dominant archives.³² As Eva von Pirch emphasized

27 See: Peggy Piesche, ‘Inscriptions into the Past, Anticipations of the Future: Audre Lorde and the Black Woman’s Movement in Germany’, in *Audre Lorde’s Transnational Legacies*, eds. Stella Bolaki and Sabine Broeck (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 222–26.

28 Heide, ‘Archiv’.

29 Okech, ‘African Feminist Epistemic Communities and Decoloniality’.

30 Sanya and Lutomia, ‘Archives and Collective Memories’, 70.

31 Izabiliza, ‘Afrekete’.

32 Auma, Kinder, and Piesche, ‘Kontrapunktische Studien’.

in the second issue, the magazine was an expression of a conscious, collective engagement with the historical marginalization of Black queer-feminist bodies of knowledge.³³ Her phrase ‘surviving in the shadows of history books’ incisively captures this social critique. *Afrekete* was far more than a medium—it was a living archive that preserved knowledge, carried out political education work, and served as a central platform for self-positioning, debate, and networking within the movement. Each issue of *Afrekete* represented transnational Afrodiasporic feminisms, both in its content and visually.³⁴ Produced in Germany, the magazine also had a transnational orientation—an indication of the far-reaching interconnections of Black queer-feminist movements.³⁵ Nevertheless, the structural precarity of movement-based archives—particularly the limited material and temporal resources—eventually led to the magazine’s discontinuation after only two years.³⁶ The short but intensive publication history of *Afrekete* highlights the fragility of non-institutional archives.³⁷ Often relying on the long-term commitment of non-state actors, they operate under vulnerable conditions. At the same time, such archives make a decisive contribution to expanding social archival landscapes by creating alternative cultures of remembrance and making visible who and what should and can be remembered.

C. RADICALLY INCLUSIVE REMEMBRANCE AS AN INSTITUTIONALIZED POLITICS OF RECOGNITION?

Not least, remembrance raises the question of who—based on socially sanctioned resources of recognition, such as street names—is allowed to

33 Eva von Pirch, ‘Schwarzer Feminismus’, *Afrekete* 2 (1988), 34–36. See: ‘Kunst, Politik u.s.w.’, in *Afrekete: Zeitung von afro-deutschen und schwarzen Frauen* 6 (1990). The publishers of *Afrekete* were Adefra Bremen, Elke Jank, and Eva von Pirch c/o Frauenbuchladen Hagazussa e. V. Bremen.

34 See: Katharina Oguntoye, ‘Die Schwarze Deutsche Bewegung und die Frauenbewegung in Deutschland’, *Afrekete* 4 (1989), 3–5, 33–37.

35 Auma, Kinder, and Piesche, ‘Kontrapunktische Studien’.

36 Izabiliza, ‘Afrekete’.

37 Okech, ‘African Feminist Epistemic Communities and Decoloniality’.

feel a sense of belonging. Which sites of remembrance are visible and accessible in everyday life—and for whom—remains a subject of controversy. The absence of a decolonial site of learning and remembrance on Wilhelmstraße in Berlin highlights the fact that the institutional anchoring of a colonialism-critical politics of remembrance is still lacking in Germany. A post-migrant and post-colonial society must assume responsibility for renegotiating conflicts over resources and identity, as well as processes of recognition within transnational fields of tension. The visions of ‘shared cities und shared memories’, as formulated by OluTimehin Adegbeye in her TED Talk ‘Who Belongs in a City?’, provide impulses for the principled division of social recognition resources and a diversified and decolonized praxis of remembrance.³⁸ It is about shared responsibility and a just distribution of the capacity to feel like an active and valued member of society. Central to this process of negotiation is control over symbolic resources. Adegbeye, as well as Brenda Nyandiko Sanya and Anne Namatsi Lutomia, call for a reorientation in the management and configuration of remembrance, archiving, and commemoration. They demand a praxis consciously shaped by those whose histories have so far been marginalized—*African-led, female-led and subaltern-led imaginaries*.³⁹ In this spirit, the emerging institutionalization of Intersectional Black European Studies—although still precarious—could serve as a foundation for a radical paradigm change.⁴⁰ Remembrance must be understood as a dynamic, conflict-laden process that extends beyond national borders. It requires spaces that facilitate intersectional connections, make geopolitical and body-political diversity visible, and promote pluralized historiographies. Radically inclusive remembrance work therefore demands not only institutional reforms but also the conscious

38 Adegbeye, ‘Who Belongs in a City?’.

39 Sanya and Lutomia, ‘Archives and Collective Memories’, 70.

40 Intersectional Black European Studies (InBEST), intersectionalblackeuropeanstudies.com/. See also: Auma, Sumba, and Piesche, “‘Reclaiming Our Time’ in African Studies’.

unlearning of hegemonic knowledge regimes. Archives must not be seen merely as storage spaces for historical documents; they must also function as active forums for social engagement. They should be spaces in which different social groups can articulate their narratives, share knowledge, and develop alternative cultures of remembrance.

It is only through this processual and participative articulation of archival and remembrance politics that the full social membership of historically excluded groups can be secured and colonial continuities within the politics of history disrupted.

At the same time, an institutionalized politics of recognition must not exhaust itself in symbolic gestures—it must strive for structural change. This includes critical reflection on the distribution of resources, sustainable support for historical initiatives within civil society, and a democratic culture of history that not only includes marginalized perspectives but also recognizes them as constitutive of collective remembrance. A ‘history from below’ requires material and infrastructural resources—financing for spaces, materials, and conservation—in order to secure resilient cultures of remembrance over the long term, and to enable a shared, more just historiography.

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

GLOBAL MEMORIES
BETWEEN DE- AND
RE-TERRITORIALIZATION

JIE-HYUN LIM

Introduction:

Emergence of Global Memory Formation

Twenty-first-century globalism has increasingly shifted its focus from imagination to memory.¹ Yet, the globalization of memory is not a novel phenomenon of this century; rather, it represents a gradual process initiated in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. As displaced persons relocated and resettled across foreign lands after the war, their memories of the Holocaust, colonial genocide, Stalinism, and other atrocities migrated alongside them. In their new localities, people began to reflect on their own pasts through events unfolding on distant continents, giving rise to transnational memory formations, in which memories became entangled across borders.² Across the globe, vernacular and institutionalized memories of past traumas are now being shaped in conversations that span national, regional, and civilizational boundaries. Memories once boxed in specific local, regional, or national enclaves have become increasingly interwoven through practices of cross-referencing, adaptive imagination, unilateral re-purposing, active dialogue, translation, and victimhood competition.

The globalization of memories has created striking interconnections among ostensibly disparate histories. Holocaust memory became intertwined with the memory of transatlantic slavery, exemplified by W.E.B. Du Bois's visits to Poland and especially the Warsaw ghetto in 1949, which afforded him a 'more complete understanding of the Negro problem.'³ Reciprocally, memories of colonial violence have evoked the Holocaust and transatlantic slavery. For instance, the Japanese military's systematized sexual exploitation of 'comfort women' catalyzed renewed reflection on sexual violence at Nazi concentration camps. Also, later revelations of sexual

- 1 Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad, *Memory in a Global Age* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1.
- 2 Astrid Erll, 'Travelling Memory', *Parallax* 17/4 (2011).
- 3 W. E. B. Du Bois, 'The Negro and the Warsaw Ghetto', in *The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois Reader*, ed. Eric. J. Sundquist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 470. This entanglement is traced back to year 1868 when a Yiddish translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in Vilnius as *Di shklaveray oder di laybeygnshaft* (Slavery or serfdom) by Ayzik-Meyer Dik.

violence during the Yugoslav Wars sharpened the global awareness of the comfort women issue in reverse order.⁴

As post-colonial memory formations emerged within the globalization of memory, they began to contest mnemonic Eurocentrism with a rich archive of memories: the transatlantic slave trade, colonial violence, ethnocide, and gendered violence in the tri-continent of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The collapse of the Cold War accelerated this process, paving the road to global memory formation. Entangled memories of the Holocaust, colonial genocide, and Stalinist terror most notably mark the post-Cold War mnemo-scape.⁵ The memorial island at the Bergen County Justice Center in New Jersey eloquently exemplifies this emerging global memory formation.

Bergen County installed the comfort women statue as part of the International Women's Day celebration on 8 March 2013, and has now erected monuments commemorating the victims of American slavery, Irish famine, the Armenian Genocide, and the Holocaust alongside it.⁶ These monuments represent more than a physical aggregation of nationally territorialized memories. Rather, through mnemonic interaction in the host country, the dispersed memories of immigrants—many of whom bore no direct ancestral connection to these tragedies save for transatlantic slavery—became enmeshed, acquiring new significance as part of a relocated, globally constituted memorial consciousness. This process reveals how global memory formation develops as distant memories encounter, compete with, reconcile, cross-reference, and mutually affirm one another. Global memory formation operates according to a logic fundamentally different from the simple accumulation of separate national memories.

4 See: Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009); Jie-Hyun Lim and Eve Rosenhaft, eds., *Mnemonic Solidarity: Global Interventions* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

5 Assmann and Conrad, *Memory in a Global Age*; Jie-Hyun Lim, 'Triple Victimhood: On the Mnemonic Confluence of the Holocaust, Stalinist Crime, and Colonial Genocide', *Journal of Genocide Research* (April 2020); A. Dirk Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the "Racial Century": Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust', *Patterns of Prejudice* 36/4 (2020), 7–36.

6 '美정부 1호 위안부기념비 뉴저지서 제막식' (First Comfort Women Monument in the U.S. to Unveil in New Jersey), *Choson Ilbo*, 9 March 2013.

The Ethical Reverberations of Global Memory

Globally entangled memories have awakened a crucial realization: *that tragic history can happen to me too*, even if it *has not yet happened to me*. This recognition functions as both a warning and an ethical imperative. It signals an unsettling awareness that, under particular historical circumstances, any of us might become—rather than merely an innocent victim of—a willing perpetrator. The future image of the continuum of complicity could be apocalyptic.⁷ The Holocaust, in this register, operates as a ‘global civil religion’, grounded in the desperate recognition that atrocities remain perpetually possible. Despite its mnemonic Eurocentricity, Holocaust memory has come to propound universal ethical and political principles that transcend arbitrary appropriations and mnemonic abuse.⁸ Indeed, the Holocaust has functioned as a generic memory template for genocides and human suffering across the globe.⁹ Many non-European memories now interact with the Holocaust as a touchstone for absolute evil—a metonym for crimes against humanity.

The year 2000 marked a milestone in critiquing territorialized memory and signaled its deterritorialization. The emergence of the global memory culture demonstrates empathy for the suffering of other nations—including former adversaries. The Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust, convened from 26–28 January 2000, dramatically illustrates this shift. The unprecedented gathering of political leaders from forty-six countries—including heads of state and deputy heads of government—centered on a single theme: Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. In declaring that the Holocaust possesses ‘universal meaning’ and ‘must be forever seared in our collective memory’, the Stockholm Declaration established remembrance of the Holocaust as a global civic virtue.¹⁰ If the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen granted the French

- 7 Ever-resonant in my concern over the moral implication of global memory formation is Zygmunt Bauman’s caution that the historical lesson of the Holocaust is ‘not the likelihood that “this” could be done to us, but the idea that we could do it’, and Christopher Browning’s insight that saw a portrait of not an ordinary ‘German’ but an ordinary ‘man’ in the face of the Nazis. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (with a new afterword) (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 152; Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (with a new afterword) (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993), 189, 222–223; Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9.
- 8 Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Marcel Stoetzler, ‘Holocaust memory in the twenty-first century: between national reshaping and globalisation’, *European Review of History*, 18/1 (2011), 75.
- 9 Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, trans. Assenka Oksiloff (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006).
- 10 ‘Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust’, *Levandehistoria*, www.levandehistoria.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-Stockholm-declaration.pdf.

Revolution universal historical significance, the Stockholm Declaration set the remembrance of the Holocaust as global memory template.

Yet the global memory formation established in Stockholm faced immediate and consequential challenges. Within four months, Jan T. Gross published *Neighbors*, a work that profoundly disrupted dominant memory culture and continues to provoke controversy in Poland to this day. Gross, a Polish sociologist and historian who had spent decades in American exile following his involvement in the 1968 student protests, revealed that the Jedwabne pogrom of 10 July 1941 had been perpetrated not by Nazi occupiers but by local Polish neighbours. This disclosure precipitated a seismic shift in Polish memory culture, unsettling established narratives at epistemological, ontological, and ethical levels. By exposing the uncomfortable truth that ordinary Poles had actively participated in Holocaust violence, the publication irrevocably damaged the national self-image of Poland as a 'crucified nation', reverberating far beyond Poland's borders. That said, the necessity for Eastern Europe to confront such truths had already been articulated. In 1992, the Polish émigré philosopher Leszek Kołakowski presciently warned that a *Historikerstreit*—a critical historical reckoning comparable to the West German debates of 1986–1987—would prove essential for Eastern Europe's coming to terms with its Communist past.¹¹ Kołakowski cautioned that Eastern European memory culture had systematically evaded accountability for the Holocaust by sheltering behind victim narratives.¹² His insight was indeed ahead of its time.

The year 2000 witnessed further developments that reconfigured global memory formation. On August 2, the German Bundestag passed legislation concerning reparations for foreign nationals conscripted into forced labour under Nazi rule. The German Foundation Act, which enshrined the political and moral accountability of the German state and German

- 11 Michael Rothberg defines the *Historikerstreit* as follows: 'In the mid-1980s, the West German public sphere was the site of a dramatic debate about the merits of comparison. Featuring some of the most prominent intellectuals and journalists of the time—including Jürgen Habermas, Ernst Nolte, Michael Stürmer, Andreas Hillgruber, Rudolf Augstein, and many others—the debate, which came to be known as the *Historikerstreit*, raged across the pages of major newspapers such as *Die Zeit* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* during the second half of 1986 and the first half of 1987'. Michael Rothberg, 'Comparing Comparisons: From the "Historikerstreit" to the Mbembe Affair', *Geschichte der Gegenwart*, 23 September 2020, geschichtedergegenwart.ch/comparing-comparisons-from-the-historikerstreit-to-the-mbembe-affair/.
- 12 Leszek Kołakowski, 'Amidst Moving Ruins', *Daedalus* 121/2 (1992), 56.

economic actors for the exploitation of forced labour, represented a watershed moment. For the first time, forced labourers from Belarus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, and other Eastern European nations, alongside Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners and prisoners of war from the France, Italy, Serbia, and the Soviet Union, gained access to reparations. The compensation programme, which took effect on 12 August 2000, extended what had previously been denied: what might be termed ‘mnemonic citizenship’ in Germany for thirteen million victims—approximately 8.4 million foreign workers and 4.6 million prisoners of war.¹³ Despite legitimate criticisms regarding compensation amounts and eligibility criteria, the German Foundation Act remains significant in compelling major German corporations—Deutsche Bank, Allianz, Daimler-Benz, Bayer, BMW, and Volkswagen—to acknowledge their accountability for forced labour, publicly acknowledge their complicity, and contribute resources to reparation programmes.

Finally, the Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery (WIWCT) convened in Tokyo from 8–12 December, 2000. Modelled on the Russell Tribunal of the 1960s anti-Vietnam War movement, the WIWCT, though lacking legal binding force, exerted substantial political impact on global memory frameworks. Activists assembled from across the world to bring charges against ten leading Japanese political and military figures, including Emperor Hirohito, for crimes against humanity. Drawing on testimony from thirty-five surviving women subjected to military sexual violence, circumstantial evidence from former soldiers’ and officers’

13 This number is from the Foundation’s official report. See: Michael Jansen and Günter Saathoff, *A Mutual Responsibility and a Moral Obligation: the Final Report on Germany’s Compensation Programs for Forced Labor and other Personal Injuries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 25, 27. The number has since increased to twenty million, including forced labourers in the occupied territories.

admissions, acknowledgments by the Japanese state, expert testimony, UN Special Rapporteur reports on sexual slavery, and archival evidence from the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the WIWCT established that the Japanese Empire and its military had institutionalized a systematic sexual slavery apparatus.¹⁴

The tribunal's verdict—guilty of crimes against humanity for rape and sexual enslavement under the comfort women system—represented a significant intervention in global memory formation, beyond its formal legal authority. The list of lawyers who participated in the WIWCT exemplifies how the rage of global society against the sexual violence of Yugoslavia and Rwanda had extended into the recognition of the Japanese military comfort women system as a crime against humanity. Among those were Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, who served as the presiding judge of the ICTY, and Patricia Viseur-Seller, the Special Advisor for Gender for the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICTY and ICTR.¹⁵ Their participation implies that the comfort women system during the Asia-Pacific War and the systemized sexual violence during the civil wars in Rwanda and Yugoslavia are grouped into the same category of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court.

However, global memory culture, despite its deterritorializing impulses, has become increasingly caught between opposing dynamics. With the Holocaust occupying gravitational centrality, memories of the Global East and South have frequently articulated themselves through comparative frameworks, cross-referencing, calculating juxtaposition against, or rejecting of Holocaust narratives. Many non-Western memory activists have deliberately adopted these comparative strategies as a tactical means of establishing their own positions within global memory formations. Memories of human rights abuses in the Global East and South have achieved international resonance primarily when they have become interactive with or entangled with Holocaust remembrance as the ethical touchstone of memory itself. There exists a degree of contingency in how remembrance

- 14 Judges of the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery, 'Transcript of Oral Judgment', articles 16–26, 27–28, 30–31, *Women's Caucus for Gender Justice*, 4 December 2001, iccwomen.org/wigjdraft1/Archives/oldWCGJ/tokyo/summary.html.
- 15 Maki Kimura, *Unfolding the "Comfort Women" Debates: Modernity, Violence, Women's Voices* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 6–8; Rumi Sakamoto, 'The Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery: A Legal and Feminist Approach to the "Comfort Women" Issue', *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 3 (2001): 49–50.

of transatlantic slavery, the Nanjing Massacre, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and comfort women has referenced Holocaust language.¹⁶ Yet, this seemingly random discursive nexus possesses genuine imaginative power in promoting deterritorialized memories.

Simultaneously, even as Holocaust memory has become increasingly de-centred, it remains vulnerable to nationalist appropriation both within and beyond the West. Auschwitz has become a site of contested memory, as exemplified by the Polish-Jewish disputes over the cross at Auschwitz and the adjacent Carmelite convent.¹⁷ Reterritorializing the Holocaust memory through the nationalist appropriation was not a Polish peculiarity. The distance separating Holocaust cosmopolitanization from its vulgarization proves distressingly international. For instance, the Anne Frank fandom in Japan and the nationalist appropriation of Holocaust memory in Serbia demonstrate how the Holocaust has functioned globally as a mechanism of national self-exoneration, allowing perpetrator nations to deflect accountability for their own war crimes and ethnic genocides.¹⁸

Post-colonial Critique of Victimhood Nationalism

Nor is victimhood-based appropriation of the Holocaust uniformly justifiable. The official memory of Israel reveals how political calculation frequently infiltrates Holocaust memory, ostensibly to justify the ethnic displacement of Palestinians. As Menachem Begin, founder of the Likud party, defended Israeli aggression, protecting 'our nation, a million and a half

- 16 Jie-Hyun Lim, *Victimhood Nationalism: History and Memory in a Global Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2025), chapters 'globalization' and 'nationalization', 77-140.
- 17 Geneviève Zubrzycki, *The Crosses of Auschwitz: Nationalism and Religion in Post-Communist Poland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 112.
- 18 Rotem Kowner, 'Tokyo recognizes Auschwitz: the rise and fall of Holocaust denial in Japan, 1989-1991', *Journal of Genocide Research* 3/2 (2001); Lea David, 'Holocaust Discourse as a Screen Memory: the Serbian Case' in *History and Politics in the Western Balkans: Changes at the Turn of the Millenium*, eds. Srdan M. Jovanovic and Veran Stancetic, (Serbia: The Center for Good Governance Studies, 2013), 65-69.

of whose children were murdered by the Nazis in the gas chambers' justifies necessary defensive measures. Countering international criticism, Begin declared that 'no nation on Earth can preach morality to our nation.'¹⁹

Victimhood nationalism has justified the nationalist appropriation of the Holocaust globally. Victimhood nationalism operates as a narrative template conferring moral superiority and political legitimacy upon nations claiming 'hereditary victimhood'—the presumed inheritance of ancestral suffering encoded in historical and collective memory.²⁰ This memory practice suffers from a catastrophic limitation: it suffocates fundamental critiques of colonialism, genocide, and the Holocaust through reductive binary thinking. The premise of hereditary victimhood, deeply rooted in popular memory, solidifies this binary opposition between perpetrators and victims, between collective guilt and collective innocence.

Rather than transforming the structural rules that produced historical tragedies, victimhood nationalism induces a dangerous desire to invert hierarchies—to preempt the victor's position, the perpetrator's advantage—while preserving the very logic that generated atrocity. Emotionally, victimhood nationalism issues in regret and denunciation of national victimization; yet it readily accepts the structural rules of colonialism and genocide so long as the positions remain potentially invertible. What is required instead is the exercise of historical self-reflection—the capacity to recognize one's potential to victimize others, thereby liberating oneself from the ideological prison of hereditary victimhood. Historical introspection of this kind should constitute the animating framework for cultural memory in the twenty-first century. Yet, victimhood nationalism, deeply inscribed in the national collective memory, fundamentally obstructs such critical awareness.

19 Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York: An Owl Book, 2000), 399.

20 Lim, *Victimhood Nationalism*, 2.

The sinister lesson of the Holocaust is not that it can happen to us again but that we also can perpetrate such an atrocity.²¹ The genuine peril lies not in victimhood per se but in moral self-righteousness, which is almost automatically sanctioned by hereditary victimhood. The escalating memory wars that characterize our global present indicate that the globalization of memories increasingly operates through reterritorialization, anchored in victimhood nationalism as its organizing principle. From the perspective of memory praxis, engaging critically with this global memory regime of victimhood nationalism becomes imperative. History demonstrates that political regime change bereft of corresponding transformations in memory regimes remains fundamentally superficial. The strategy of pursuing international political transformation while preserving territorialized memory cultures has already exhausted its historical possibilities.

The moment has arrived to problematize victimhood nationalism—to expose it as a power structuring truth production within global memory formations. Only the deliberate ‘sacrifice’ of victimhood nationalism can initiate the first genuine step toward transformative global memory regime change.²² Yet, territorialization remains inadequately addressed. Territorialized memories are not exclusively bound to the nation-state. As the mnemonic Eurocentrism illustrates, the territorialization of memories often extends across transnational regions and continents. It raises concern about how to provincialize the mnemonic Eurocentrism of the Holocaust by revealing multidirectional memories of colonialism, the Holocaust, and Stalinist crimes in the global memory space. This challenge remains formidable.

The Achille Mbembe debates, ignited in 2020 in Germany, signal a paradigm shift from the national history of the Historikerstreit in 1986/87 to the transnational history of

21 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, 152.

22 Considering that victimhood nationalism operates at this mnemonic junction where the empire and the nation, collective guilt and innocence intersect, Germany’s pretentious perpetrator nationalism is complicit with the victimhood nationalism among its historical victims. Especially when it builds a hierarchy among its victim groups, competition among victimhood nationalisms gets messier.

the Historikerstreit 2.0 in the post-Cold War era.²³ From a post-colonial perspective, the Mbembe affair reveals how German national conscience—rooted in Holocaust guilt—can paradoxically impede the transnational conscience necessary for reckoning with global colonialism. Breaking the taboo of Holocaust incomparability remains inseparably linked with the de-provincialization of German memory culture. A reconceived understanding of global colonialism permits us to situate the Holocaust within the continuous development of German genocidal campaigns in Africa and to locate German invasion and occupation of the Slavic East firmly within the Western European colonialist project.²⁴

Ultimately, the globalization of Holocaust memory has enabled a non-hierarchical appreciation of historical trauma's comparability, propelling memory studies beyond mnemonic Eurocentrism. Drawing on the applicability of post-colonial critique to memory studies, the post-colonial memory regime has cast doubt on Eurocentric self-reflection—the notion that the Holocaust functions as the perpetual point of return through which Western civilization reconfirms its humanist values. Echoing Zygmunt Bauman, Western civilization and West-led global modernity are not antithetical to the Holocaust; rather, they embed the structural possibility of the Holocaust. Thus, the post-colonial memory culture disrupted 'an age-old strategy of self-exculpation',²⁵ the convenient opposition between Nazi perpetration and Western liberal democratic innocence collapses.

If the Holocaust and colonial genocide are a risk inherent within global modernity itself, then the Holocaust becomes a global question transcending specific ethnic and national boundaries. Post-Eurocentric memory enables us to problematize the history of global modernity through a critical lens that recognizes the West as the implicated agent of colonial genocide and the Holocaust. Also, this critical angle simultaneously permits a critique of the nested Orientalism present among the 'lesser Whites' of peripheral Eastern Europe and

23 Per Leo and Kolja Unger, 'Historikerstreit 2.0 über Shoah: Historiker Per Leo fordert globale Perspektive auf NS-Verbrechen', conversation, *Deutschlandfunk*, 11 July 2021.

24 Jie-Hyun Lim and Eve Rosenhaft, 'Introduction', in Lim and Rosenhaft, eds., *Mnemonic Solidarity—Global Interventions*, 6.

25 Aleida Assmann, 'On the (IN)Comparability and Suffering in German Memory', *German Life and Letters* 59/2 (2006), 194.

Russia. In fact, ‘lesser Whites’ in Eastern Europe were not simply a victim of Western racial hierarchies but active participants in constructing and maintaining global whiteness.²⁶ Tensions between mnemonic Eurocentrism and post-colonial memory formations, however, continue to erupt throughout global memory landscapes.

Hannah Arendt, Frantz Fanon, and Achille Mbembe

After the eruption of the Gaza war in 2023, the paradoxes of contemporary memory politics became starkly evident. Israeli diplomats wore yellow Star of David patches to the 30 October 2023 UN Security Council meeting, condemning the Hamas attack. Across the Pacific, Palestinian diplomatic representatives in Tokyo compared Israeli weaponry to the ‘Little Boy’, the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, drawing explicit parallels between Israel’s military aggression and American nuclear bombing. Simultaneously, three Palestinian teenagers laid wreaths at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial for atomic bomb victims.

The mnemonic conflict did not stop there. The University of Cologne announced the disinvitation of Jewish-American philosopher Nancy Fraser from her position as Albert Magnus Professor for 2024, citing her signature on the ‘Philosophy for Palestine’ initiative—a statement the institution deemed elevated Hamas’s October 7 attack to the status

26 See: James Mark, Anikó Imre, Bogdan C. Iacob, and Catherine Baker, eds., *Off-White: Central and Eastern Europe and the Global History of Race* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2024); Piotr Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order: Adjustments and Aspirations, 1918–1939* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021); Elżbieta Kwiecińska, ‘An “India of Europe”: Stanisław Szczepanowski (1846–1900) and Galician–Indian Parallels in “The Misery of Galicia”’, *Artha Journal of Social Sciences* 20/2 (2021), 57–73.

of 'legitimate resistance'.²⁷ When Masha Gessen was almost not awarded the Hannah Arendt Prize in December 2023, the *Guardian* sarcastically wrote that 'Hannah Arendt would not qualify for the Hannah Arendt prize. She would be canceled in Germany today for her political position on Israel and opinions about contemporary Zionism, which she remained critical of from 1942 until she died in 1975.'²⁸

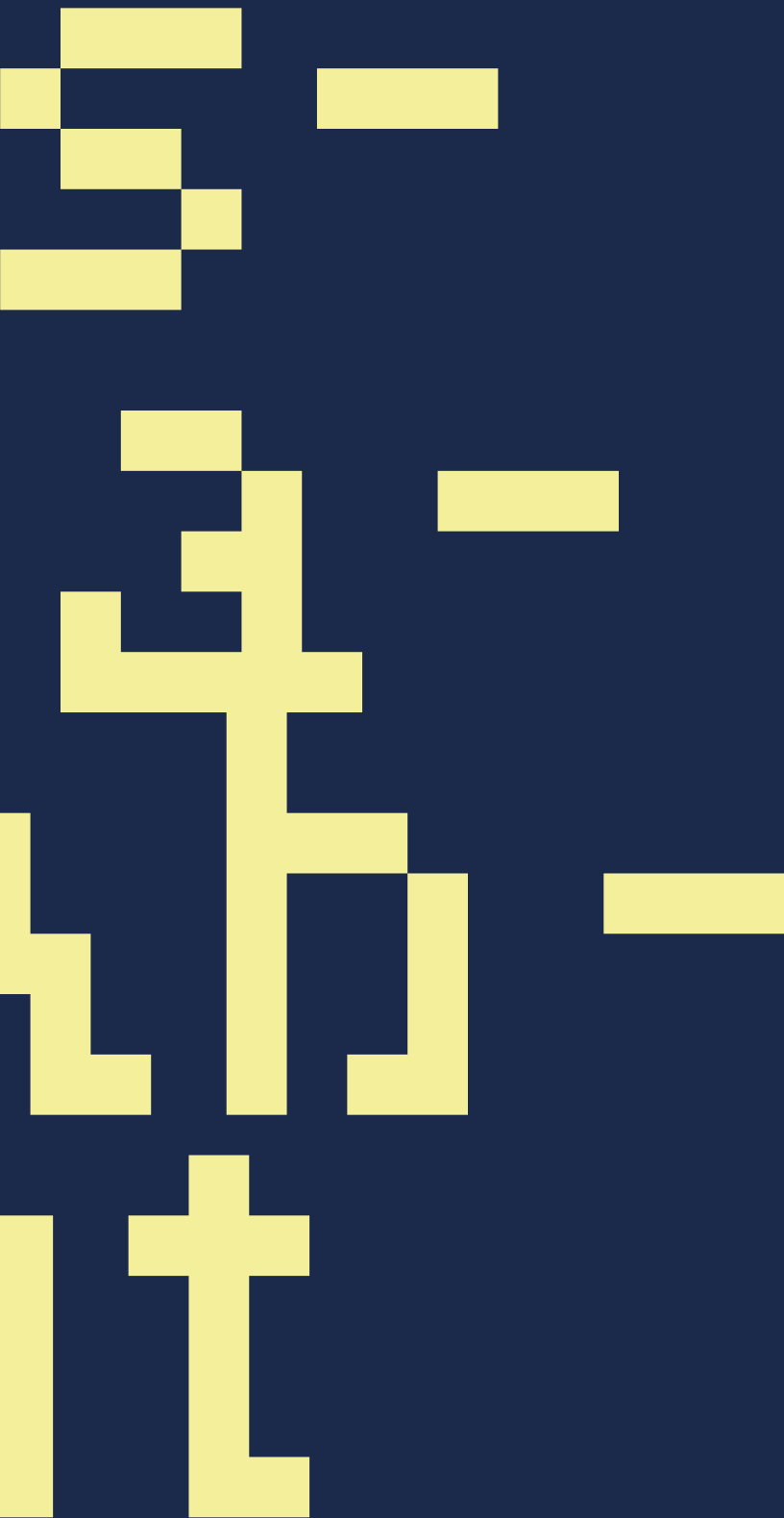
On Black Sunday, many Hamas sympathizers on social media invoked Frantz Fanon's revolutionary theory to argue that the attack represented 'a direct and inevitable reaction to colonial oppression by Israel.'²⁹ Yet, Fanon's reflections on anti-colonial violence never constituted a blanket moral endorsement of indiscriminate violence against civilians. In fact, Fanon fought Nazism and collaboration in the name of universal human rights, and his vision of decolonization in principle reflects on the critical entanglement of colonial rule, anti-Semitism, and racism.³⁰ Nothing implicitly shows the paradox of today's global memory formation more than the recognition that neither Arendt nor Fanon would qualify for intellectual and political leadership within their respective contemporary territories. The memory formations that invoke their legacies often betray the critical principles animating their actual work.

Memory is not linear. Critical relativization and radical juxtaposition offer possibilities for deconstructing the hegemonic hierarchies embedded in global memory formations. Mnemonic

- 27 University of Cologne, 'Withdrawal of the Albertus Magnus Professorship 2024', www.uni-koeln.de/en/university/news/news-detail/withdrawal-of-the-albertus-magnus-professorship-2024.
- 28 Samantha Hill, 'Hannah Arendt would not qualify for the Hannah Arendt prize in Germany today', *Guardian*, 18 December 2023, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/dec/18/hannah-arendt-prize-masha-gessen-israel-gaza-essay.
- 29 Etan Nechin, 'Would Frantz Fanon Have Supported the Oct. 7 Massacre? His Biographer Isn't So Sure', *Haaretz*, 2 February 2024, www.haaretz.com/life/books/2024-02-02/ty-article-magazine/premium/would-frantz-fanon-have-supported-the-oct-7-massacre-his-biographer-isnt-so-sure/0000018d-63eb-d480-adbd-ebfbaa3a0000.
- 30 Danilo Schulz, 'Der Algerienkrieg als Matrix für den Nahostkonflikt? (I)', *Merkur* 78/904 (August, 2024), 28-32.

solidarity among conflictual memories does not emerge from imposing hierarchical ordering on a linear narrative. Instead, it sustains itself by maintaining critical tension among the cacophony of discrete memories that confront and intertwine within the global memory space.³¹ When memory of victimization departs from the zero-sum game of victims—relinquishing the reterritorializing impulse that privileges one's own nation's suffering while ranking others' afflictions as subordinate—and finally transcends victimhood nationalism, diverse and even conflicting memories can converge in what we might term genuine mnemonic solidarity.

31 For an alternative approach to mnemonic solidarity that is not based on antagonistic memories that rose from international conflicts or cosmopolitan memories that homogenize sufferings, see: Anna Cento Bull and Hans Lauge Hansen, 'On agonistic memory', *Memory Studies* 9/4 (2015), 390–404.



CURATORIAL REFLECTIONS:
MEMORY AS PROCESS
From Static Monuments to Living Practice

ANJA SALEH

The etymology of the word ‘remembrance’ takes us to its Latin roots: *memorare*, meaning ‘to be mindful of’, and *re*, indicating a return. Remembrance is not merely about recalling the past; it is about revisiting it with purpose, intention, with an active commitment to transformation. This understanding of remembrance forms the foundation of this contribution. To remember, in this sense, is not a passive act but an active one: it involves interrogating the past, grappling with its enduring legacies, and ensuring that historical consciousness informs both present and future actions.

In 2022, the German government made a decision to consider the creation of a place of remembrance and education dedicated to its colonial history. However, little to no progress has been made since then. Meanwhile, initiatives such as the *Memory in Motion* network have begun conceptualizing what such a place could and should look like. This text considers how curatorial and artistic practice can contribute to a more diverse and inclusive culture of memory as well as the lessons Germany might learn from other contexts, while clearly recognizing the distinct challenges posed by its own historical and political landscape.

Limitations of Traditional Archives and the Need for Alternative Spaces

The work of remembrance must extend beyond the construction of physical spaces or the accumulation of institutional archives. As global historian and professor Jie-Hyun Lim¹ points out, traditional archives require both financial resources and political power—both of which are unevenly distributed and often withheld from those most affected by colonial histories. In the absence of these resources, how do we create alternative, non-traditional archives given that memory is not static but layered, contested, and alive? It demands that we listen attentively to the silences, the erasures, and the acts of censorship that shape our narratives and ultimately history.

Listening is an active, artistic, and political act. To listen to silence is to attempt to interpret it, to ask: What is this silence telling us? Whose interests does it serve? What truths does it obscure? These questions are particularly urgent in a context where the legacies of colonialism intersect with contemporary issues of systemic racism, and the rise of

1 See Jie-Hyun Lim’s text in this publication on pp. 54–66.

anti-democratic movements. Addressing these intersections is not simply about reckoning with the past; it is about confronting the structures of violence that persist in the present. Germany's complicity in global injustices today mirrors historical patterns of exploitation. Though the specific contexts may differ, the underlying mechanisms of systemic harm remain disturbingly consistent.

The notion of memory as a zero-sum game, wherein one history is elevated at the expense of another, presents a significant barrier to inclusive remembrance practices. As Michael Rothberg and others argue, the concept of *multidirectional memory* offers an alternative framework that recognizes the interconnectedness of history and especially historical injustices.² This approach calls for dynamic spaces of remembrance capable of addressing colonial histories while simultaneously responding to contemporary socio-political realities.

Importantly, such spaces must not be confined to urban centres or elite cultural institutions. Peripheral and rural areas are often overlooked in national memory projects. They too carry the weight of historical violence, and must be included in efforts made toward inclusive remembrance. However, the challenge extends beyond geographic representation. Meaningful engagement with these histories requires a re-evaluation of the structures that define and disseminate memory.

Institutions that claim to support art and memory must be held accountable for their role in perpetuating exclusionary structures that do not include those who have been or continue to be affected by colonial continuities. Rather than replicating existing institutions with different faces, there is a need to envision new forms of organizing, sharing, and remembering, forms that resist commodification. This shift necessitates a commitment to people- and community-centred approaches that privilege lived experiences over bureaucratic efficiency.

2 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

Challenges of a Dedicated Space

The idea of a space dedicated to colonial memory sounds like a long overdue endeavour and yet it raises crucial questions: What purpose does it serve? Whose voices does it centre? What risks does it entail?

While such a space has the potential to acknowledge silenced histories and encourage reflection, creating a space of (un-) learning also risks becoming an endpoint rather than a starting point. A static monument that invokes guilt rather than a catalyst for systemic change. Memory confined to a single space risks freezing narratives and disconnecting them from the ongoing realities of structural inequalities rooted in colonial legacies. Without integrating colonial history into Germany's broader education system and linking it to tangible actions, such a place might remain a symbolic gesture rather than a transformative force.

This concern is heightened by the reality of the precarity of institutional support. A reminder of this vulnerability came with the recent announcement that the Dekoloniale space in Berlin must close; a decision that underscores the extent to which spaces dedicated to colonial memory mostly exist at the mercy of state funding and therefore shifting political priorities. Drawing on public tax money, such funding is not a gift but a responsibility. Yet, decisions about its allocation frequently prioritize short-term trends rather than sustained commitments to justice and accountability.

The Role of Art (and) Education

Art and education are central to this reimagining process. Alternative pedagogical models that draw on oral traditions, craft knowledge, and community-based learning have the potential to challenge dominant epistemologies and to position the act of critical questioning as an essential tool for remembrance.

In my work *The Herders and The Weavers Were The First To Know*, herders and weavers along with their distinctive crafts are recognized as holders of educational knowledge. Their crafts are deeply tied to their environments and are among the first to be impacted by economic and climate changes, raising urgent questions about economic shifts and their effects on cultural landscapes and heritage crafts. As their surroundings change, so too does the viability of their craft, making herders and weavers some of the earliest and most profoundly affected but also one of the first informed by and about these transformations.

By centering these forms of knowledge, the work challenges conventional hierarchies of learning and highlights the interdependence of culture, ecology, and economic structures. It presents a long-standing alternative knowledge system to the Western canon; one that is deeply rooted in place, tradition, and intergenerational transmission. This is not unique to a single region (here: Burkina Faso and Egypt) but exemplary of how every place holds its own knowledge traditions, offering valuable insights into sustainability, adaptation, and resilience. There is much to be learned from these practices, not in terms of technique but also in how they shape ways of knowing, remembering, and relating to the world.

Directly intersecting with artistic practice and thought, this highlights the vital role art itself has to play in the process of decolonizing memory. However, art cannot be separated from the material conditions of its production, nor can it be depoliticized to fit within capitalist frameworks of cultural consumption. To acknowledge that art is also a financial institution is to recognize the structural inequalities that shape its creation, distribution, and accessibility. When we speak of art's transformative capacity, it requires art to be engaged with class consciousness and with a deep commitment to issues of education, access, inclusion, and participation. Without this critical engagement, we risk perpetuating an aestheticized version of history that obscures the realities of systemic oppression.

The work of remembrance necessitates an ongoing interrogation of how spaces, both physical and conceptual, mediate memory and power. My curatorial and artistic practices operate within this critical space, questioning not only *what* is remembered but *how* and *by whom*. In this regard, they align with international examples such as Sonia Lawson's work at the Palais

de Lomé, where contemporary artistic interventions engage with Togo's colonial past, and Ibrahim Mahama's Savannah Center for Contemporary Art (SCCA) in Ghana, which reconfigures historical narratives through innovative approaches to space, collective memory, and artistic production. Such spaces remind us that memory work cannot exist in isolation from the communities it seeks to serve. Instead, it must be embedded in a process of

(re)imagining—one that remains critically attuned to both history and present structures of power. These forms of learning emphasize memory as a living, embodied practice rather than a static record. They remind us that education is not only about accumulating knowledge but about building connections, encouraging critical engagement, and challenging dominant narratives.

Finally, it is essential to interrogate the implications of democratizing memory. Genuine democracy and by extension, meaningful remembrance, requires that participation be both voluntary and revocable. The other day, I came across an Instagram post saying that 'everyone in the United States is in a non-consensual contract with genocide' and I believe this assertion applies equally to Germany, where historical and contemporary injustices remain structurally embedded and we are all a part of it. But what does it mean to withdraw consent from such a system? Is resistance—*becoming ungovernable*—not itself a democratic act? Democracy, in its truest form, disrupts hierarchies, centers multiplicity, and equalizes dissent and agreement.

Towards a Transformative Culture of Memory

Germany currently has seventeen physical spaces dedicated to the remembrance of its National Socialist past and the Holocaust in the Berlin-Brandenburg region alone. While these spaces have contributed to a national memory culture, they also highlight an imbalance: the lack of institutionalized remembrance for colonial violence. A comprehensive approach to memory work must recognize the continuities between different forms of state violence, rather than treating them as separate and unrelated histories.

For years, discussions in Germany have referred to the concept of *Rechtsruck*, a so-called sudden shift to the right in political discourse. Yet the term ‘Ruck’ suggests a sudden movement, whereas the reality is one of continuity rather than rupture. This mischaracterization allows the illusion of progress to persist, even as structural inequalities remain intact. In this context, the urgent question is: What has been missing in our approaches to memory work that has allowed such regressions to take hold?

The persistent rise in right-wing extremist crimes in Germany underscores the limitations of existing remembrance institutions in curbing such ideologies. Despite the presence of numerous Holocaust memorials and educational programmes, these measures alone have not prevented the resurgence of extremist activities. In 2024, German authorities recorded 33,963 politically motivated right-wing crimes (until November 2024) marking a significant increase from previous years.³ This alarming trend raises critical questions about the effectiveness of current approaches to remembrance. Are these institutions merely symbolic, serving as boxes to tick, or do they actively engage society in a collective process of reflection and action? The term *Rechtsruck* fails to capture the continuity of these

3 ‘Rechtsextremismus’, *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, www.verfassungsschutz.de/DE/themen/rechtsextremismus/rechtsextremismus_node.html.

extremist undercurrents: the issue is not a sudden shift but an ongoing challenge.

If we establish a dedicated space for colonial history and its enduring impacts, we must critically assess its potential for real change. Will it serve as another checkbox on a national to-do list, or will it foster genuine understanding and transformation? The increasing number of right-wing crimes indicates that mere physical spaces are inadequate for combating deep-seated ideologies.

Therefore, we must envision places of remembrance that are accessible, inclusive, and community-centred. These spaces should welcome diverse audiences, providing safe environments for grief, discussion, and collective learning. Importantly, they should operate independently of state funding to ensure sustainability and freedom from imposed state influence. Such an approach demands a collective responsibility to reflect on our history and strive for a more equitable future.

In conclusion, the rise in right-wing extremism and ideologies despite extensive remembrance infrastructure highlights the need for a more

dynamic and participatory approach to memory culture and places of remembrance. Remembrance must evolve from static monuments to active, inclusive processes that engage all facets of society in confronting and learning from past injustices.

Justice is not an endpoint; it is a process. So, too, is remembrance. It requires a willingness to navigate discomfort, to engage in difficult conversations, and to be accountable to those whose histories have long been marginalized. The goal must not be to reproduce existing structures with different faces but to imagine new ones that reflect the multiplicity of lived experiences.

James Baldwin said something along the lines of ‘The purpose of art is to lay bare the questions which have been hidden by the answers.’ The practice of asking, the art of questioning is one I rigorously practise and invite everyone to participate in. Memory work requires us to ask difficult questions, not as a rhetorical exercise but as a means of forging new paths forward. Our task is to critically examine what we need in spaces of remembrance and how we can build structures that do not merely replicate those that have failed us. Remembrance, if it is to be meaningful, must be an active, ongoing, and honest practice.

REMEMBERING IN

ALLIANCES

REMEMBERING IN
ALLIANCES

MIRJAM ZADOFF

The 'German culture of remembrance' has roots in many places, including several not located in Germany. One of them is Amsterdam, where in 1933 the publicist Alfred Wiener conducted interviews with people who, like him, had fled Germany during the Second World War. In London, where Wiener escaped after the outbreak of the war, he founded the Wiener Library in 1939, which has collected documents, objects, interviews, and much more to document the crimes of the Nazis. Another place where German memory culture began is Warsaw, where, imprisoned by the Nazis in the largest wartime ghetto, historian Emanuel Ringelblum and seventy activists joined together to form the group Oneg Shabbat (Friends of the Shabbat), which secretly met every Saturday, at the risk of their lives, to collect everything that embodied the history of Polish Judaism. They also compiled statistics on life in the ghetto, covering the high death rate, hunger, illnesses, and deportations to concentration camps. Before the complete destruction of the quarter as the ghetto uprising was being crushed, they buried the archive in milk churns and metal boxes under a Jewish school. Nearly every member of Oneg Shabbat was murdered, and only some of the archive was found after the war. Today, these 30,000 documents form the basis of our knowledge about the Warsaw ghetto and the Holocaust in Poland.

The roots of the German culture of remembrance are also found in Potsdam, where the Allied forces met in 1945 and made a far-reaching decision: all National Socialist symbols on and in public buildings as well as monuments and statues were to be destroyed or removed. Today, statues and buildings from the Nazi period still populate the public space, and all swastikas and busts of Hitler, with few exceptions, have been removed.

After the war, survivors in displaced persons camps formed historical commissions in the camps. They conducted interviews and collected documents and statements from other survivors. Their work was designed to form the basis for the upcoming war criminal trials of Nazi officials. Other survivors founded international committees which, each year, brought back survivors from throughout Europe to the sites of the former concentration and extermination camps to commemorate the dead and ensure the atrocities would not be forgotten. Other survivors wrote poems, novels, and memoirs about their experiences and published them, often independently, in Paris, Buenos Aires, Madrid, or Jerusalem—some texts were never translated into German, some were translated decades later. Across these

places lie the roots of the German culture of remembrance, as well as in the many local initiatives that, for eighty years, have demanded recognition of the murder of Roma and Sinti, homosexuals, as well as chronically ill and disabled persons during the Holocaust, acknowledgement of these crimes, the payment of compensation, and the establishment of documentary centres, museums, and monuments.

The foundations of the German memory culture also lie in the huge imaginary library of books on National Socialism and its crimes, which includes books in many languages throughout the world. Today, the obstacles that numerous authors had to overcome have largely been forgotten. One of these authors was Raul Hilberg, who fled Austria for the United States to escape the Nazis, and later helped liberate the Dachau concentration camp as an American GI. Hilberg brought back countless files documenting the crimes to the United States. In 1954, he completed work on his extensive study *The Destruction of the European Jews*, which to this day is considered a standard work of Holocaust research. However, Hilberg couldn't find a publisher, and it was only with the help of a private donor that he was able to afford a small print run. Yad Vashem, Israel's official memorial institution, declined the manuscript, on the grounds of the controversial subject of the Jewish councils and their forced collaboration with the

oppressors, and even the German publisher that originally bought the rights decided against publication. Other German publishing companies refused to release the book after experts from the Munich Institute for Contemporary History repeatedly spoke out against it, first in the 1960s and again in the early 1980s. It was only in 1982 that the German translation, *Die Vernichtung der europäischen Juden*, was released by a small publisher in Berlin, for the stiff price of 128 Marks.

These numerous heterogeneous and transnational projects formed the structure of what is known today as the special German form of Holocaust memory. During the 1980s and 1990s, books and films about the Holocaust, as well as conversations with survivors, reached a large public for the first time. Furthermore, in 1999, with the official concept for the sites of remembrance by the federal government, the basis was laid for the state sponsorship of memory institutions. At the time, British historian Timothy Garton Ash declared the German approach to its Nazi past—half ironically, half in admiration—as ‘deutsche DIN-Norm des Gedenkens’ (German DIN standard for remembrance) to be the standard for remembrance.¹

Therefore, German institutions were repeatedly described as exemplary models of remembrance by historians and curators across the globe, both in terms of content and architecture—for example, as reflected in the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, located in the southern United States, a private institution dedicated to remembering the lynchings that continued into the 1950s. Over the past decade, US journalists and authors have travelled to Germany to observe the different forms of remembrance first-hand. Despite the general approval, visitors also expressed criticism of gaps in German remembrance, particularly regarding its colonial history, as well as the failure to pass on the memory of National Socialism within the families of the perpetrators and followers.

This transatlantic exchange came at an important moment for the United States. The gaps in

1 See: Timothy Garton Ash, ‘Vier Wege zur Wahrheit: Eine Zwischenbilanz’, *Die Zeit*, 3 October 1997, 44, www.zeit.de/1997/41/Vier_Wege_zur_Wahrheit.

the country's own history needed to be filled, namely in regards to the Indigenous population, African Americans, and Latino immigrants. Initiatives such as the *New York Times's* '1619 Project', which began in 2019, aimed to broaden American history with new narratives and shared national myths. The research initiative set the date of the beginning of the country's settlement at 1619, the year the first ship carrying enslaved Africans reached the American coast, one year before the arrival of the Mayflower carrying pilgrims from England. The project generated a great deal of enthusiasm in the US but was subject to an almost immediate backlash, as a white-nationalist and racist counter-narrative was promoted by Donald Trump and his constituents. Since then, right-wing revisionist views of history have been strengthened while books that explore uncomfortable, less heroic aspects of the American past have been questioned and banned in droves. Although the MAGA movement cannot deny the history of slavery and structural racism, it nevertheless attempts to absolve today's generations of any responsibility. This attitude is especially apparent in short videos directed at children made by the Prager University Foundation—PragerU for short—an NGO, not a university, as the name would suggest. These animations on American history are extremely popular in conservative circles. Themes such as the genocide of Native Americans, the history of slavery, or structural racism are addressed as two white children time-travel through history. On one of their journeys, the children meet Black educator Booker T. Washington, who founded a school and university at the end of the nineteenth century. Washington speaks to the children about the racism and the restrictions he experienced, to which the children express regret and apologize. The educator responds, almost outraged, that they are not to blame. He says, 'Future

generations are never responsible for the sins of the past’—which is historically false, since there is no record of him uttering this phrase. In this image of history, the crimes against the Native populations, African Americans, and other minorities—along with ongoing racism—are merely a sad circumstance for which no one is responsible.

The extent of America’s struggles over the interpretation of their own history is reflected in the bans introduced during Trump’s second administration, which views the historical narratives of minorities, women, and queer people with suspicion while withdrawing public funding from institutions that are considered ‘woke’ or too liberal. This revisionist political history, and its influence on the world’s most important university system, will also affect Europe, and Germany in particular. In January 2025, in a conversation with AfD politician Alice Weidel, Elon Musk declared that there was too much focus on past guilt in Germany, and that one finally had to look forward. One month later, American vice president J. D. Vance employed a similar argument at the Munich Security Conference. Enough of the firewalls, he declared, Germany should finally cooperate with the far right—a statement he made a day after visiting the Dachau concentration camp. Vance follows the strategies of the far right in the US, who repeatedly turn the concept of freedom on its head. He declared that Europeans are suppressing freedom of speech when they criminalize hate speech and smear campaigns on social media. In 2015, Vance’s predecessor Mike Pence, when he was still governor of Indiana, passed a law called the ‘Religious Freedom Bill’, which allows state residents to discriminate on religious grounds if it corresponds with their religious convictions—for example, not serve a gay customer because homosexuality offends one’s own (evangelical) convictions. Freedom of speech in the United States has been reinterpreted by the right through a massive cultural struggle. More recently, Hitler salutes, coats imitating SS uniforms, and other forms of appreciation for the aesthetics and policies Nazi Germany have repeatedly become a marker of this shift. American interventions in the 2025 German election campaign, as well as

in the local culture of remembrance, have caused considerable irritation in Germany. The goal of the authoritarian MAGA movement is the end of American democracy and all forms of equality, including acknowledging the historical responsibility of the perpetrators of past crimes and atrocities. Many aspects of German remembrance culture are a thorn in their side. Holocaust survivor Max Mannheimer repeatedly stated the following in his continuous appeal to young people in Germany: ‘You are not to blame for what happened, but you have the responsibility to ensure that it never happens again’—a sentence that many schools have adopted as their motto. This form of historical responsibility corresponds to what Musk disparagingly terms ‘past guilt’.

The deterioration of transatlantic relations is a sign that learning from the experiences of the twentieth century is no longer a priority. Also in Europe, the central gains following the catastrophe of the Second World War—such as the general right to asylum or human dignity as formulated in Germany’s *Grundgesetz*, or Constitution—are increasingly being questioned. In a 2023 report by the German federal government on asylum and migration policy, human dignity appears only once—namely, in the title: ‘Humanität und Ordnung’ (Humanity and Order). A common European asylum policy now calls for camps to be constructed at Europe’s external borders to prevent people in need, including children and adolescents, from coming to us for help. Insecure third countries, such as Rwanda or Uganda, are repeatedly discussed as sites for receiving refugees. For Vienna-based migration researcher Judith Kohlenberger, this is no surprise. She writes that a belt of violence already

surrounds Europe—a violence and harshness directed against those seeking protection, slowly advancing, step by step, from the borders into the heart of European societies, where it spreads.²

Today, more and more people live in Germany whose families experienced the Second World War in another part of Europe or the world. There are people in Germany who have survived other wars or have fled them, who bring memories from other countries, and people whose families have experienced German crimes in other places, such as Namibia or Tanzania. And not least, there are people living in Germany whose relatives or friends are victims of right-wing extremist or anti-Semitic terror—a direct continuation of National Socialism. In recent years, this complex collective of remembrance has experienced many splits and breaks. The federal government's 'Framework Concept on Remembrance Culture' (2024) has once again highlighted these gaps—particularly in the histories of migration, colonialism, and democracy. However, its shortcomings have led to a loss of trust in many communities. Nevertheless, it is precisely the experiences of transnational and transcultural commemorative work that can help Holocaust remembrance build the necessary alliances. At a time when only individual survivors speak out publicly, their texts and testimonies should be given greater weight. Lessons in humanity and universalism—as well as in optimism and clarity—are urgently needed.

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

2 'Die Gewalt an den Grenzen', *Der Pragmaticus* (27 March 2024), www.derpragmaticus.com/r/asyl-demokratie.

MEMORY POLITICS
Decolonizing the colonial memories of
indígena-marrón bodies

CHANA MAMANI

In this paper I propose critical, active reflection on the politics of memory around the European colonial heritage in the Global South from 1492 onwards. I am guided by three questions: first, how do we understand memory and the remembrance of colonialism from today's perspective?; Second, how do we include memory into this work?; and third, what should we take into account when creating a space for learning and memory about colonialism in Germany specifically? Through these questions I seek to analyse and understand the past, memory, and colonialism and demonstrate its impact on *indígena-marrón*¹ people in the Global South. Finally, I shall suggest some perspectives and strategies to aid academic and curatorial research, establish spaces for learning about the colonial past and promote future decolonial actions.

Memories and colonialism: 1492

Memory, understood as an ability to carry the past into the present (time), is not a linear or static process. The individual recollections and experiences which constitute memory are subjective and selective, shaped by emotions, perceptions,

¹ In order to render structural racism in Argentina and Latin America visible and to resignify our ancestral history, I use the term *indígena-marrón* to refer to the brown body of Indigenous descent as a political construct.

and social, political, and cultural factors.² In this regard, as Elizabeth Jelin observes in her book *State Repression and the Labors of Memory*:

Even individual memory, implying an interaction between the past and the present, is culturally and collectively framed. Memory is not an object that is simply there to be extracted, but rather it is produced by active subjects that share a culture and an *ethos*.³

It follows that individual memories are complex, dynamic social constructs. If that is the case, how are these memories constructed?

The construction of memory is sustained by a web of cultural symbols and practices such as rituals, monuments, squares, museums, and plaques. By means of interaction and repetition, these elements evoke the past and endow it with shared significance within a specific social context. In *The Struggle for the Past: How We Construct Social Memories*,⁴ Jelin argues that memory is the frame in which subjects construct the meaning of the past, a past which is updated by interactions with the present and aspirations for the future in an active process of *remembering, forgetting, and silencing*.

This process entails story-writing, or in other words, using narrative and discourse to configure the past and interpret it for the present. In this way, memory also generates a sense of *identity and belonging*, as it helps us to define who we are and points us towards where we wish or do not wish to go.

- 2 Essential foundations were laid here by the philosopher Paul Ricœur in his book *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (2000), where he analyses how individuals interact with memory and the past, exploring links between individual experience and social context. He highlights two fundamental aspects: first, memory as personal experience, where recollections are interwoven with emotions and perceptions and expressed through personal narratives; second, collective memory, which is influenced by social, cultural, and historical context and expressed in shared narratives, rituals, and practices. In this space, memory becomes a field for dispute and negotiation. The English translation *Memory, History, Forgetting* was published in 2004 by The University of Chicago Press.
- 3 Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Loss of Memory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 68.
- 4 Elizabeth Jelin, *The Struggle for the Past: How We Construct Social Memories* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2021). First published in Spanish in 2004 as *La lucha por el pasado, como construimos la memoria social*.

In this sense, memory is a process of *interaction and action* (from past to present) that constructs narratives—some which have been transmitted onwards, while others are alternatives to what has been imposed. As a result, we have a diversity of memories to constitute identity and belonging. However, not all these memories acquire the same visibility or recognition, which raises the question: *Are some memories more legitimate than others?*

If we follow Jelin's argument, society does not have one single memory of the past. At various moments in history, however, a broader consensus can be observed around a hegemonic vision of the past, and this often reflects the narrative imposed by the 'conquerors'. Meanwhile other histories—other memories—emerge and resist this dominant vision. As the author puts it, 'the space of memory is thus an arena of political struggle'.⁵ The hegemonic vision tends to be exclusive, as it interprets the past by creating and perpetuating narratives which are skewed by prejudice and make assertions about certain groups and individuals. One illustration of this is the historical and memorial construction surrounding Christopher Columbus and his arrival in America in 1492. On 12 October 1992, Spain 'celebrated' the quincentenary of that event, and other countries have chosen to call it a 'Meeting of Two Worlds'. These interpretations of the colonial past fail to address the Indigenous genocide which took place in the Americas as a result of his arrival. Aníbal Quijano takes issue with this denial in his essay '¡Qué tal Raza!',⁶ where he describes how European modernity established its domination over

5 Jelin, *State Repression*, 16–17.

6 Aníbal Quijano, '¡Qué tal Raza!', *Revista del CESLA* 1 (2000). Accessed: antropologiadeoutraforma.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/quijano-anibal-que-tal-raza.pdf. Other decolonial authors such as Enrique Dussel, Ramón Grosfoguel, Walter Dignolo have likewise demonstrated the impact of 'modernity' on the Indigenous communities of Latin America following the invention of race and racism.

the Americas during the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries by means of colonization and capitalism.

Similarly, in his fundamental work *La revolución india*⁷, the Quechuaymara⁸ writer Fausto Reinaga argues that European domination imposed a single vision of history, culture, and race while bringing violence, oppression, and pillage to Asia, Africa, and Latin America:

Universal history is the history of Europe: in this ethnocentric view, the race and culture *par excellence* are its own. Its classical division into ancient, medieval and modern is based on events in Europe. Other peoples foreign to its territory are thus marginalized and are in consequence barbarians ... The derogatory epithets still remain: savage, primitive, wild, indigenous. Always in the meaning of inferior beings, sub-humans.

In his seminal work *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity*, Enrique Dussel argues that the notion of 'modernity' is rooted in a foundational myth.⁹ This myth, in turn, was predicated on the purported superiority of a white, religious, European 'race', and this justified the need to 'civilize' the Indigenous peoples, whom they labelled 'savages' and 'barbarians'.

This narrative granted legitimacy to the domination, exploitation, and pillaging of Indigenous nations by Europe during the colonization process and the establishment of nation states in Latin America. Moreover, this universal historical vision of the colonial past in America and the oppression of Indigenous communities and communities of African descent was shored up by knowledge production in the social and human sciences. The writer Genara Pulido-Tirado denounces this as 'epistemic violence'.¹⁰ She identifies the construction of 'a series of systematic, regular and repeated discourses intolerant of alternative epistemologies, seeking to deny the alterity and subjectivity of Others in a manner which perpetuates the oppression of their knowledge and justifies their domination.'¹¹

7 Fausto Reinaga, *La revolución india* (2010 [1969]), 81.

8 This adjective refers to the Indigenous nation of Quechua and Aymara.

9 Enrique Dussel, *The Invention of the Americas: Eclipse of 'the Other' and the Myth of Modernity* (London: Continuum, 1995).

10 Genara Pulido-Tirado, 'Violencia epistémica y descolonización del conocimiento', *Socio-criticism* XXIV/1-2 (2009), dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/4637301.pdf.

11 Pulido-Tirado, 'Violencia epistémica y descolonización del conocimiento', 177.

Contested memories: power, knowledge, and being

For a critical understanding of how colonialism constructed memories and narratives in the Global South, I propose focusing on three aspects of the colonial domination initiated, as described above, in 1492. The first aspect is *the coloniality of power*; a concept used by Quijano to describe how colonialism imposed upon the peoples of the world a hierarchical system founded on racial classifications ranging from 'superior' (white European) to 'inferior' (non-European, of African descent, Indigenous).¹² The second aspect is *the coloniality of knowledge*,¹³ which refers to the imposition of a Western body of knowledge as the only valid epistemic system, devaluing non-European wisdom and insights as 'inferior' or 'primitive'. This is reflected, for example, in the hegemony of Western social sciences and humanities, which ignore the experience and knowledge of Indigenous peoples and communities of African descent:

The social sciences, Eurocentric in character since their inception, offered the image of an autonomous Europe, forged historically without links to other cultures and consistently ignoring the colonial relationship produced between Europe on one side and Africa, Asia and America on the other.¹⁴

The third aspect, the *coloniality of being*, a concept developed by Nelson Maldonado-Torres,¹⁵ proposes that colonized communities were denied humanity and reduced instead to a condition of 'inferiority' and 'irrationality'. This denial served to justify the violence and genocide perpetrated

¹² See: Anibal Quijano, 'Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America', *Nepantla: Views from South* 1/3 (2000), 533–580.

¹³ This concept was developed in various forms by Walter Mignolo, Enrique Dussel, Maldonado Torres, and Genara Pulido-Tirado.

¹⁴ Pulido-Tirado, 'Violencia epistémica y descolonización del conocimiento', 183.

¹⁵ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, 'On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the development of a concept', *Cultural Studies* 21/2–3 (2007), 240–270.

in the Americas while at the same time laying foundations for dominant colonial memory.

Enzo Traverso pursues a similar line of thinking in his work *Le passé, modes d'emploi* when he points out that, 'there are official memories supported by institutions and even states, and then there are underground, secret or forbidden memories'.¹⁶ He distinguishes between 'strong memories' and 'weak memories', which influence the present and shape identity and belonging. 'Strong memories' gain social recognition and become an institutional force. They are expressed through *vehicles of memory*¹⁷ such as monuments and official acts of commemoration, and in this way they impose a dominant narrative. One example, as mentioned, is official nation state narratives about the 'discovery' of America, which constitute an antagonistic memory of colonialization and the genocide committed against Indigenous nations. By contrast, 'weak memories' obtain scant recognition and are marginalized in official accounts. These are the memories of ethnic 'minorities' and excluded groups, not least their memories of slavery, colonialism, dictatorship, and genocide. Both forms of memory are dynamic and conflictual. This means that 'weak memories' can sometimes subvert 'strong memories', opening up a new space for justice and reparation. As Traverso has pointed out, 'memory of the Holocaust, a unifying narrative that has become a "civil religion" in the Western world, is a good example of this shift from weak memory to strong memory.'¹⁸

As described by these writers, the structures of domination (coloniality of power, knowledge, and being) established from 1492 onwards reveal how colonialism imposed a racialized hierarchy that devalued non-Western, non-European forms of knowledge and denied personal status to members of colonized communities. This negation, which refused to grant visibility, was perpetuated by means of the dominant historical narratives which generate official memory, including the official commemorations celebrated by nation states.

16 Enzo Traverso, *El pasado. Instrucciones de uso. Historia, Memoria, política* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Ediciones Jurídicas y Sociales, 2007), 49. First published in French by *La Fabrique Éditions* in 2000. The page references here are to the Spanish translation.

17 Elizabeth Jelin, *Los trabajos de la memoria* (Madrid: Siglo XXI Editores, 2002), 37.

18 Traverso, *El pasado*, 49.

However, as Jelin and Traverso both argue, the construction of memory is an *arena of class struggle*, because weak memories emerge and can, occasionally, undermine or be co-opted by more hegemonic forms.

Decolonizing memory and the colonial narrative

I will no longer be made to feel ashamed of existing. I will have my voice: Indian, Spanish, white. I will have my serpent's tongue—my woman's voice, my sexual voice, my poet's voice. I will overcome the tradition of silence.
—Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera*, 1987

My memory, which constructs belonging and identities, is permeated and influenced by the colonial past, or what Gloria Anzaldúa has called 'the colonial wound'.¹⁹ This wound is expressed in my face, my surnames, my mother tongue, my nation of origin, my sexuality, the indelible marks of a past which, as the years pass, become evident and conscious in my memories.

In this same vein, let me mention Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*, her 'biomythography' where she reflects on her own process of self-discovery. Lorde revealed that over the course of her life she learnt that her sense of belonging did not depend on adhering to a specific, homogeneous identity but on embracing the complexity of her multiple differences. In other words, she found her place by accepting her difference in hegemonic US society rather than seeking security in conformity.

That said, questions come to my mind as part of this memory process. *What action can we take to resist this erasure or negation? How does memory express itself when it lacks a specific space? And from where, from what political, cultural, and*

19 See: Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza* (Madrid: Capitán Swing Libros, 1987).

artistic position can we transform a weak memory? To untangle all this, I feel I need to introduce a decolonial perspective, the Indigenous sense of time and memory.

I shall begin with an aphorism: *Quipnayra uñtasis sarnaqapxa-ñani*.²⁰ It comes from my Indigenous nation and is Aymara in origin. It translates as, 'looking back and forward we can walk towards the future present.' I do not see the past merely as a point of origin on the line of time, but seek to situate the past in the future, which we do not know and which erupts into the present. That is what happens, for example, in the memory process, when a person sets about constructing identity and belonging, passing through moments of shame, negation, acceptance, and transformation before finally achieving a spiritual inner reparation of their own. This shift enables us to act in ways that are political, public, in education and culture, those that materialize in literature (such as poetry or essays), in public interventions (such as posters or performance), and in institutional settings (museums).

This process of decolonizing²¹ the colonial past in order to transform and seek racial justice from one's own singular perspective has also been applied in 'decolonial aesthetics',²² an approach that seeks to liberate art and aesthetic theory from concepts imposed by colonialism. Given that art has the power to affect our senses, emotions, and intellect, and that aesthetic philosophy seeks to understand the nature of meaning, the authors argue that both artistic creation and its interpretation must start by recognizing the 'colonial wound' and making it visible, given the tendency of Western art, culture, and aesthetics to disguise it or even—perhaps unintentionally—silence it by only attaching value to one way of seeing and doing art.

20 As discussed by the Bolivian writer Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui.

21 The concepts 'decolonize' and 'decoloniality' in research and critical practice are linked but there are significant differences. 'Decolonize' refers to the active process of transforming power structures and knowledge inherited from colonialism with an emphasis on self-determination for the communities concerned. 'Decoloniality', in turn, is focused on challenging hierarchies and power structures rooted in Western modernity and promoting the transformation from a 'popular' perspective of resistance, for example that of Indigenous communities or communities of African descent with their situated knowledge.

22 This concept is developed in P. Pablo Gómez and Walter Mignolo, *Estéticas decoloniales* (Bogotá: Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, 2012), [adelajusic.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/decolonial-aesthetics.pdf](https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839463093).

That is why I see a critical review of the Eurocentric and racist narratives present in, for example, exhibitions of modern and contemporary art or of colonial history as a crucial part in challenging the dominant forms of representation, which are hegemonic and white. Proposing new exhibition formats

which recognize the perspectives of colonized and Indigenous peoples entails confronting an uncomfortable past and it calls for careful thought about the tensions inherent in spaces of memory.

I believe that lending visibility to the colonial wound is a crucial step towards historical and racial reparation. Moreover, creativity will be an essential tool in conveying a sense of *past-present-future* in memories. Constructing decolonized memory and taking action to decolonize means grasping this movement in time and colonial memory.

Uncomfortable memories: critical decolonizing practice

It follows from the above that engaging with the discomfort of the decolonial perspective means activating a way of *thinking, feeling, and doing* that generates critical and transformative practices. I understand that a critical, decolonial reading of art

and of the narratives currently on display (in museums and literature, for example) invites us to go further than simply reviewing the past. It means injecting questions, challenging the visibility of artists, activists, researchers, and curators, not least by recognizing different forms of art and whether or not they are accessible: What is art and who is it for? Which actors come into the cultural spaces (like museums) and why? Who narrates and exhibits decolonial art, and who genuinely represents decolonization? These questions invite us to examine the power structures that shape the world of art.

I understand that it is not an enviable task to review the past, especially a colonial past, that is so present in our contexts in both the Global South and North. It is an uncomfortable and painful process of memory that must be addressed in order to repair the colonial wounds of history. We feel this painful discomfort, for example, when we look at the early voyages and accounts of Columbus (1451–1506), the chronicler Ulrich Schmidel (1510–1580), or the entrepreneur Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913). These individuals in their various roles took part in the exploration, exploitation, plundering, and abduction of Indigenous peoples, and they perpetuated narratives to justify racialization and territorial dispossession.

Schmidel, for example, who joined the first expedition of Don Pedro de Mendoza to South America, chronicled their journey to the Río de la Plata.²³ He described Indigenous women in derogatory and hypersexualized terms, reducing them to exotic objects. Hagenbeck, notorious for organizing and marketing ‘human zoos’, placed on display Indigenous families, *fueguinos*, who had been kidnapped from the south of Argentina and Chile and transported to the major cities of Europe, including Berlin, Hamburg, and Paris, where he exhibited them as ‘savage cannibals’. These displays, which lasted into the early twentieth century, were a manifestation of Europe’s colonial racism and ethnocentrism and they contributed to spreading stereotypes which denied humanity to Indigenous peoples. It is fair to claim, therefore, that these examples serve to illustrate a colonial memory charged with violence and dehumanization that still persists today. That is why I invite you to engage with the discomfort of colonial history and the colonialism perpetrated in the Americas. Focusing on

23 His account was first published in German in 1567 under the title *Reise nach Süd-Amerika in den Jahren 1534 bis 1554*. It was translated into Spanish in 1731.

Germany specifically, it is important to conclude by stating that while Germany is known to be one of the economic and political powerhouses of Europe, it is also *re-cognized* for a dark, colonial, modern past which led to persecutions, abductions, theft, displacement, the trafficking and parading of human beings, and even to the development of eugenicist methods and policies targeting the race and bodies of *those who matter and those who don't*, or what Frantz Fanon called 'zones of being and zones of non-being',²⁴ beyond the boundary of humanity and the human.

24 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1967 [1952]). See also Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1963 [1961]).

In Germany, too, there are hotbeds of resistance, weak memories in the North itself. I suggest that this decolonizing perspective should be introduced or taken into account in any production of art, literature, history, performance, or museum installation. At the same time, it is a reminder to take care not to present this colonial world that we wish to decolonize as something exotic, or as a piece of folklore.

It is hard to say whether these suggestions will change the way we see and the way we see each other. Nevertheless, I do believe that we must move our bodies, inhabit this *past-present-future* time which, in my case, resonates Indigenous ancestral memory, and come together to build future memories and narratives with reparation, participation, spirituality, representation, and racial justice at its fore.

Translated from spanish by Kate Vanovitch



REMAKING THE DECOLONIAL
Breaking Free from Naturalism

SÉNAMÉ AGBODJINOU

Who Speaks for Nature?

This question may seem peripheral. In fact, it is central. Every time we invoke the repair of colonial damage, we should ask: Who is speaking on behalf of nature? After all, it was nature that was first wronged in the grand gesture of expropriation/appropriation. Not because it was materially plundered, but because it was conceptually confiscated. It was, in fact, under the auspices of naturalism—the value system that separates humans from nature and commands the former to dominate the latter—that Europe established itself as the centre of all that is good, of reason, of truth, of history and order, and so on, while simultaneously viewing the rest of the living world as mere matter to be governed.

Naturalism, the Matrix of Colonialism

Colonialism is not, first and foremost, an economic or political venture; it is the inescapable stumbling block of a metaphysical project—one might even say they are consubstantial. In fact, naturalism is the condition of possibility for the colonial enterprise. Before it set about dominating peoples, Europe first severed the human from the living. It declared nature to be its radical externality and therefore available. Henceforth, Europe was merely able to perceive nature's putative 'utilities' without the prudence, care, forbearance, and compensations that co-belonging prescribes everywhere else. This would soon be cast as the immense periphery of the world's centre—an undifferentiated amalgam of ahistorical, organic societies: the devil's vast empire and the tomb of the spirit. Meanwhile, it naturalized certain humans, thus legitimating their subjugation.

The same thought mechanism that distinguishes subject and object, spirit and matter, and reason and corporeality establishes the hierarchy between colonizer and colonized. The sixteenth-century Valladolid controversy, which institutionalized slavery, was not merely a theological dispute; it was the inaugural scene of an ontological colonialism with a naturalistic foundation. It was here that certain peoples were decreed to belong to nature rather than history, partaking in silence rather than vocal expression.

From Valladolid to Berlin: Separation Becomes a System

From Sepúlveda to Descartes, the distance did not increase, strictly speaking; it was distilled to a finer point. It attains its pure outline with Hegel, as Europe wraps itself in its refusal to embrace the world. The former justifies conquest by the ‘naturalness’ of peoples; the latter, a century afterwards, proclaims mastery of nature as humanity’s destiny. Between the two, metaphysics turned on its axis: God was no longer master of the world—reason was. Naturalism became epistemological. The Enlightenment universalized this logic: freeing the human from nature is the civilizational programme. History becomes the yardstick by which the degree of people’s disembodiment is measured. But only through the dialectical vice does separation reach its culmination: Europe is cast as the subject of the universal Spirit, the other worlds its infancy. Europe becomes history. Africa is deemed ‘outside history’ on the grounds that it remains ‘natural’.

Then comes Berlin (1885): naturalism becomes a map. What metaphysics had conceived, geopolitics executes. The pacification of the European continent is signed against a newly declared enemy: nature. The cannons that once fell silent between

fratricidal brothers are
now trained on nature
within the framework
of a war that federates

under the twin banners of ‘civilization’ for industry in Africa and ‘progress’ for its repercussions in Europe. Strictly speaking, this remains naturalism. Europe has made peace at the expense of nature and of colonized peoples. In truth, the two are one. Land, forests, and peoples are turned into ‘resources’; the carve-up, the border, administration, and bureaucracy bring the separation to completion. The map becomes the territory; the real becomes subordinated to the sovereignty of representation.

The Spiral of Extraction and the Trap of Immanent Colonialism

Modernity has made no headway; it revolves around itself, deepening the gesture of mastery through expropriation. From religious mission to scientific mission, from military to digital conquest, the same paradigm winds on, fundamentally colonial at its core. In reality, one should not isolate a single one of its transmutations. Otherwise, we risk patrimonializing it, even at the very heart of mechanisms ostensibly dedicated to its repair. Pursuing this project requires mobilizing a fine-grained attentiveness to its naturalist manifestations. Capitalism, for example, is merely the economic rendering of the same paradigm: the systematic monetization of the distance the human has taken from the things among which it was once entangled—nature, the group, the body. Each new dis-organic rupture does not enlarge the domain of the market; it sharpens it.

How does naturalism recycle itself into its very critique? As the paradigm, as the operating system of modernity. Ecological and decolonial discourses are unconsciously infused with it whenever they purport to ‘speak for nature’. In doing so, they reinstall nature as an object of discourse rather than a system of co-belonging. Western neo-animism, which claims inspiration from Indigenous wisdoms, renews an exotic sentimentality:

it celebrates ‘nature’ yet still dispossesses the peoples who are its living expression. Likewise, ‘wilderness’ policies exclude local communities in the name of preservation: a colonial ecology that re-enacts the gesture of expulsion. Even ‘the sustainable’—a moral notion—remains captive to the logic of profit. It is colonized. To repair without transforming the paradigm is to prolong the debt. Repair ought to partake not of reform but of revolution. Revolution, for its part, is anti-naturalist.

Transvaluing the Real

To step out of naturalism entails relocating the centre of enunciation. More radically still: it is to abandon separation as a starting point of thought and begin from relation. Not repairing nature—inhabiting the world.

Indigenous peoples, who make up five percent of humanity and handle eighty percent of terrestrial biodiversity, embody this politics of continuity.

They are not defending an abstract ‘nature’; rather, they preserve, without ‘protective’ enclosures, an order of the world grounded in gift and counter-gift, the included middle, land’s inalienability, etc. Their way of existing—where care, struggle, and world are one—constitutes the true ecological avant-garde, and thus a decolonial one.

Where coloniality recedes, the earth breathes. This is the law of equivalence of the living. The vernacular revolutions and non-romantic ecologies they reformulate amount to a politicization of co-belonging and responsible anthropocentrism, which ought to inspire every gesture of remembrance.

The Architecture of Living Remembrance

A place of memory for colonialism, conceived from this proposition, should resonate neither as a monument nor as a museum in the classical sense: not a closed object dedicated to the grammar of the past but a space of re-inhabitation of the world, porous to the complexity of the colonial so that it finds no purchase on the site.

Its architectural stance should refuse the frozen commemorative gesture—the one that isolates, that separates the viewer from history—and instead adopt an ecotonal form, that is, one sited in between: between building and ground, between matter and memory, between human and nature.

This place would speak less about colonialism than from the avoidance of its persistences, including their anticipations. It would host regeneration, planting, sound, and speech. It would be made of reversible materials, permeable soils, and spaces of use rather than of veneration.

It would be natural.

Reparation here would take the form of an architectural gesture of relation: a building that breathes with the earth, that gives room to the communities' voices and to the continuity of the living. Accordingly, all monumentality would cease to be vertical, and all museification, fixed; it would become a fragment of the world returned to the world's memory.

It would be habitable.

Conclusion

Colonialism did not merely conquer territories; it durably disorganized the given of the world. Undoing colonialism would not suffice. Coloniality must be addressed. The hard line here is naturalist. Nature is not threatened by the hu-

man as such, but by the disembedded human, whose very dynamic is to colonize. Likewise, naturalism forms the metaphysical substrate of colonialism rather than a simple epistemic regime. The separation of human and nature precedes racial and economic

hierarchization. It constitutes their condition of possibility.

Coloniality presupposes a conversion of attention, a sidestep away from naturalism, away from the project of a separate human. The decolonial gesture begins when we stop speaking in nature's place and start speaking from it. More prosaically, it is a matter of shifting decolonial critique from a moral or political terrain to an ontological one. By underscoring this other essence of colonialism, we drop the blinders and touch a fundamental knot: the very structure of the Western model, which appears in rarely articulated filiations (Sepúlveda, Descartes, Kant, A. Smith, Hegel, Bismarck, Musk), and which only naturalism allows us to illuminate. Without such attentiveness, we would systematically fail at the geopoetics of the world, which any place dedicated to the repair of colonization ought to prototype.

Translated from the French by Manyakhélé Diawara



PLACES OF MEMORY
IN HAMBURG

The Bismarck Monument

Historic Museums Foundation Hamburg

The Bismarck Monument in the Alter Elbpark in Hamburg was erected in honour of the first chancellor of the German Reich, Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898). Immediately after his death, a committee composed of members of Hamburg's upper class, including senators, bankers, merchants, shipowners, architects, and museum directors, campaigned for a monument in the city. It was constructed in 1906 at the enormous height of thirty-four metres. It was and still is the largest of all the monuments to Bismarck.

Between 1939 and 1941, a bunker with capacity for nine hundred people was built in the cavity of the monument's circular building. It was adorned with unusual wall and ceiling paintings with quotes from the Bismarck era, his family coat of arms, and nationalistic and Nazi ornaments (the Prussian and Imperial Eagles).

From a sociopolitical perspective, the monument demands an in-depth reappraisal in light of the current debate on the country's colonial history. Not only did Otto von Bismarck host the Berlin Conference of 1884/85 that divided the African continent among the European colonial powers, but the shipowners and merchants who sponsored the monument were largely from the milieu that profited from colonial exploitation.

Today, the monument is viewed by many as an expression of an authoritarian and colonial tradition. A reframing of the monument—which can be seen from far in the distance—is necessary given its positioning, usage, and meaning, which involve complex references to colonialism, National Socialism, discrimination, and long-overlooked questions of social justice. The process of critically engaging with the monument and its artistic contextualization was triggered following protests from civil society and the academic community against the uncritical, costly restoration of the monument, which also failed to address Hamburg's colonial past.

In 2021, numerous workshops with international experts were held to discuss potential approaches to the monument. These were followed by an international open competition in 2013 that invited artists and architects to develop ideas of how to contextualize the site. The idea was for the perception of the structure—as representative of hundreds of other Bismarck memorials across Germany—to be disrupted to highlight its strained relationship to the principles of democracy, discourse, and plurality in an open society. This intervention signalled the need to further develop the culture of remembrance in Germany.



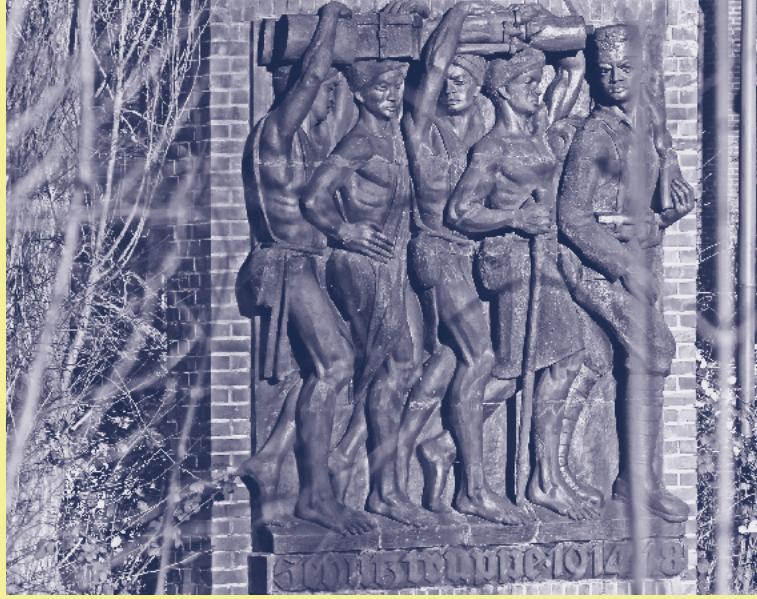
After closely engaging with the competition entries, the jury concluded that the task, in all its complexity and facets, could not be fulfilled by one single artistic intervention. In a subsequent procedural step, it recommended shifting the emphasis toward education and social discourse in order to facilitate the urgently needed contextualization of the site.

'Tanzania Park' in Jenfeld

Salon International e.V.

'Tanzania Park' is a prime example of the difficulties Hamburg faces in dealing with its colonial past. In the Jenfeld district of Hamburg, two listed historic buildings—the German East Africa War Memorial (incorrectly known as the 'Askari Reliefs') and the Schutztruppen Memorial of Honour—stand behind a fence in close proximity to the former site of the Lettow-Vorbeck barracks. The buildings' facades display seven colonial portrait reliefs. The two reliefs erected during the Nazi period that once flanked the entrance to the barracks honour Germany's colonial past and celebrate the supposed 'loyalty of the Askari'. The term 'Askari' refers to African soldiers who served in the German 'Protection Force', in this case in the colony of German East Africa. This is closely linked to the myth surrounding General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, who is romanticized here as an undefeated colonial war hero. In 2003, the ensemble of historic monuments was dismantled without authorization and re-erected in the newly created Tanzania Park. Following two decades of ongoing debate over Hamburg's handling of its colonial past, and despite massive criticism, the ensemble, with its problematic visual language, still stands close to its original site.

Together with locals from the surrounding area, the participative project on Tanzania Park searches for colonial traces and asks: How can a neighbourhood deal with its colonial heritage? What aspects of history does the park conceal? The project is open-ended and intends to give space and voice to as many perspectives as possible, promoting collective learning, discussion, and reflection on the future of the district of Jenfeld.



The name ‘Tanzania Park’ raises a number of critical questions, especially with regard to its genesis and those who participated in it. The fact that it was chosen without the involvement of Tanzanian partners or members of the Tanzanian diaspora in Germany is cause for justified concern. Furthermore, the name carries a colonial representational connotation and can be considered insulting. Despite these concerns and criticism, the name ‘Tanzania Park’ continues to be used in this context in order to highlight its significance in the current debate and to promote a public discussion on the need for a sensitive and respectful naming policy. Furthermore, the name is used colloquially in the district. For the sake of simplicity and to emphasize the project’s processual character, the project coordinator Salon International e. V. continues to use the term.

Baakenhafen

Jan Kawlath

Baakenhafen is a central site of remembrance for German colonial history in Hamburg. As a port basin and logistics hub from which major German shipping companies operating routes to Africa departed—notably the Woermann Line and the German East Africa Line—it occupied a key position within the colonial infrastructure of the German Empire. It also served as the central port for the colonial war against the Ovaherero, Nama, and Damara and the genocide perpetrated against them between 1904 and 1908, as nearly all white German colonial soldiers were deployed from here to their military engagements.

Baakenhafen thus connected not only the colonies but brought the colonial war back to the metropolis of Hamburg. Approximately 23,000 white colonial soldiers fought on the German side in this war, all of whom were transported by ship from Germany. With only a few exceptions, these troops travelled via Baakenhafen. There were over 290 troop transports during the colonial war, over ninety percent of which either departed from or returned to Baakenhafen. In addition, the vast majority of military supplies and equipment—including over 11,000 horses—were shipped from this port. These historical events and structures show the site's central importance as a 'colonial war logistics hub' for both Germany's and Hamburg's colonial history.

In addition to its military-logistic importance, Baakenhafen was also a site of colonial staging, where colonial soldiers were celebrated as war heroes and noble warriors. Although the port was located in a restricted area, on certain occasions thousands of people with special entry tickets gathered to greet the soldiers or bid them farewell. Representatives from the military, government, and business glorified these missions in speeches that framed them in a racist and colonial world-view. Hamburg's newspapers adopted this romanticized perspective, contributing to the interpretation of the war as a necessary 'civilizing mission'. All soldiers received so-called gift parcels from the Hamburg Senate and were entertained with food and drink. The celebrations at Baakenhafen were events in which large crowds, alongside official representatives, enthusiastically celebrated the soldiers and their military deployment.



An event that clearly demonstrated the support of the Hamburg Senate and the shipping companies was the return of Commander-in-Chief Lothar von Trotha in December 1905. Although he had failed in the eyes of the emperor and military leadership because he had not achieved a definitive victory, the highest representatives from Hamburg's politics, business, and military attended his reception at Baakenhafen. Mayor Johann Burchard and shipowner Adolph Woermann greeted him personally. Neither the lack of interest from Berlin nor the recent publication of his notorious 'extermination orders' in German newspapers prevented the representatives from greeting him with gift parcels and a handshake.

Today, Baakenhafen is central to social engagement with Hamburg's colonial heritage and the colonial war against the Ovaherero, Nama, and Damara, as the city functioned both as a logistics hub and as a site of colonial stagings. Perhaps more than any other location in Germany, it offers an opportunity to understand the colonial war and genocide as part of Namibian and German history. The site's history sheds light on the attitudes of political, business, and civil-society actors in the colonial metropolis of Hamburg toward the war and genocide. This understanding enables a public debate about what this history means for our society today, and how it should be remembered at the site.

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

MEMO IN MOTI

ORY

in Hamburg in January 2023

ON I





2

- 1 From Left to Right:
Carsten Brosda, Suy Lan Hopmann, Uta Schnell
- 2 Group photo at *Memory in Motion*, Hamburg, 2023.
From Left to Right. Back row: Jürgen Zimmerer,
Ciraj Rassool, Malick Ndiaye, Tiago Sant'Ana, Verena
Westermann, Manuela Bauche, Johanna Schulze, Mèhèza
Kalibani, Talya Lubinsky, Tendai Sichone, Nana Asafu-
Adjei, Rehema Busch, Beatrice Angut Oola, Meryem
Choukri, Suy Lan Hopmann, Madeline Danquah, Lorena
Díez Arias, Elisabeth Kaneza
Middle row: Anna Yaboah, Sénamé Agbodjinou, Daniela
Vizgarra, Jessica Ziada Korp, Michael Küppers-Adebisi,
Renée Eloundou, Eleonore Wiedenroth-Coulibaly
Njoki Ngumi, Memory Biwa, Syowia Kyambi, Zoé Samudzi,
Iris Rajanayagam, Sima Luipert
Front row: Aïcha Diallo, Eric Otieno Sumba, Ibou Coulibaly
Diop, Chana Mamani, Angela Amarilla

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4



5

- 3 Eric Otieno Sumba
- 4 From Right to Left: Simon Salzmann, Sima Luipert,
Anna Yeboah, Madeline Danquah, Iris Rajanayagam,
Manuela Bauche
- 5 Peggy Piesche



MEMORY IN MOTION I



- 6 Excursion to the so-called Tanzania Park and a guided tour at the Lettow-Vorbeck Barracks in Hamburg
- 7 Renée Eloundou
- 8 Anke Schwarzer

6



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9



MEMORY IN MOTION I

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9 + 10

Excursion to the so-called Tanzania Park and a guided tour at the Lettow-Vorbeck Barracks in Hamburg

11 Ibou Coulibaly Diop pictured with the so-called Askari Reliefs

12 Participants at the so-called Tanzania Park



12



13

- 13 Participants in the community space Eeden in Hamburg
- 14 From Left to Right:
Eleonore Wiedenroth-Coulibaly
and Ibou Coulibaly Diop







15

- 15 From Left to Right:
Renée Eloundou and
Kodjo Valentin Glaeser
- 16 Millicent Adjei
- 17 From Left to Right:
Peggy Piesche,
Beatrace Angut Oola,
Rehema Busch



17





- 18 From Left to Right:
Karen Taylor, Zoé Samudzi
- 19 From Left to Right:
Back Row: Memory Biwa, Mèhèza
Kalibani, Simon Salzmänn, Nadine Seidou
Front Row: Michael Küppers-Adebisi,
Adetoun Küppers-Adebisi.
- 20 Jessica Ziada Korp
- 21 Beatrace Angut Oola
- 22 Nana Asafu-Adjei



19





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22

- 23 From Left to Right: Malick Ndiaye,
Uta Schnell
- 24 Jessica Ziada Korp, Paul Spies,
Samson Kambalu, Ohiniko Toffa





23



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26



27

- 25 Keynote by Noa Ha
- 26 From Left to Right: Mèhèza Kalibani, Sénamé Agbodjinou
- 27 From Left to Right: Mèhèza Kalibani, Sénamé Agbodjinou, Rehema Busch, Noa Ha in a panel conversation



28



29

- 28 Talya Lubinsky in conversation with Mirjam Zadoff about the practice of memory work.
- 29 Discussing the results of the group session at *Memory in Motion I* with Eric Otieno Sumba
- 30 Noa Ha





31

32

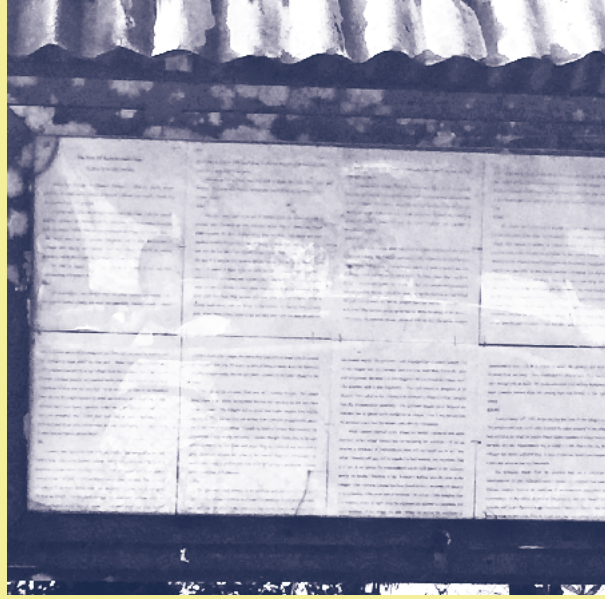


- 31 Sima Luipert speaks about
memory from the perspective
of Ovaherero and Nama descendants
From Left to Right: Sima Luipert,
Talya Lubisnky, Mirjam Zadoff
- 32 Elisabeth Kaneza

WE.M SHOT

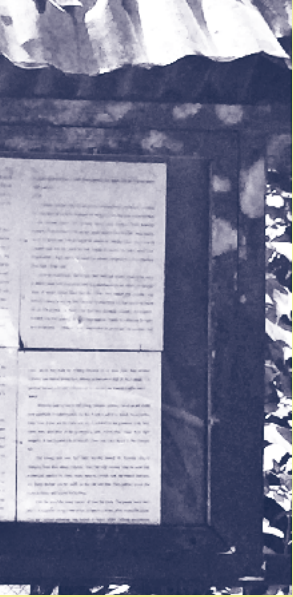
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FOR SOUMADAU EN SOKEHS &
HIS FELLOW WARRIORS

EMELIHTER KIHLENG



NOT-SO-DISTANT-MEMORY, 2017
MASSACRE SITE OF 1911, KUMWUNLAID

a wire fence surrounds a cement square
 built on rocks
 inside the square lies
 what looks like a rectangular cement grave,
 odd,
 a sign is erected there with papers posted
 underneath what looks like glass
 or is it plastic?

my reflection reflects back at me
 peach shirt, eyes squinting,
 sun blazing
 cramped, uncomfortable
 this site of brutality
 couldn't we make it nicer?
 it is unloved

a house borders the fence
 koloumw wasah, I think to myself
 I wouldn't want to live next to these eni
 angry eni, fifteen of them
 killed by firing squad
 Sokehs warriors
 Sounkawad
 ohl tohroar

EMELIHTER KIHLENG

late in the night
 the sewi blows
 and their eyes open
 piercing the darkness
 the undead are restless
 still seeking revenge
 still wearing their koahl
 carrying their machetes

a weipwul grows there
 the young leaves missing



**GRAVEYARD:
 GERMAN CEMETERY
 BEHIND KEPINLE CHURCH,
 KOLONIA**

not far from the massacre site lies
 the German cemetery
 behind Kepinle Church
 like most Pohnpeians, I'd never been there

I wasn't even aware of this place
and, like most Pohnpeians, I only visited
because we took visitors,
colleagues from the other historic preservation
offices in Micronesia and American Samoa

Gustav Boeder, the German district officer's
headstone reads
(from the German):
*Here rests with God
my dearly beloved husband,
our loving father;
Gustav Boeder,
born 11 Sept. 1860,
died 18 Oct. 1910.
Love survives death.*

headstone made of basalt rock
a glossy, likely marble plaque
if written by Pohnpeians would read:

iei Gustav Boeder
Kepina nan mwehin Sehmen o
Soumadau en Sokehs me kasikihdi
E lemei oh e kasarohwehdi ohlen Pohnpei kei
E sohte wahuniki tiahk en Pohnpei

here is Gustav Boeder
Governor during the German period
Soumadau en Sokehs shot him
he was cruel and he shamed several Pohnpeian
men
he did not respect Pohnpeian culture

we mourn and honour
Soumadau en Sokehs
our brave warrior
whose body lies in the unmarked mass grave
Indigenous memory survives death



2019: WE REMEMBER

ke mihmi Sehmen???
you're living in Germany???
ke sohte masak mehn Sehmen kan?
you're not afraid of those Germans?
mehn Sehmen kan sohte kamasopwehk?
those Germans aren't scary?

they keep asking
surprised that I am living in Sehmen
in Germany
far far away in the land of those
who once colonized us
they want to know what I am doing there
I doadoak
I'm working
I pahn mihmihki sounpar ehu.
I'll be there a year.
ke komwad.
you're tough they tell me.
perhaps I am...
re mwahu sang mehn Amerika. re mehleh.
they're better than Americans. they're sincere.
assuring friends and family that I am safe
in this land that is a distant memory of
brutality

Pahpa and I drive around
 with my laminated Hambruch photos
 taken in 1910
 I show them to guests at Neileen's grandson's first
 birthday party
 to FSM National police officers preparing
 for the inauguration of the new FSM President
 to Sahngoro and Likend U
 to the old, to the young
 to anyone who wants to look into our past
 Pahpa Maiko dene re mesen eni
 Nohno Mi puts on her glasses
 carefully examining each photo
 black and white photos
 unfamiliar faces
 that look like hers
 Nohno wants to recognize someone
 but does not

people want to see pictures of Soumadau en
 Sokehs
 who fought bravely against the Spanish
 Soumadau, who later shot District Officer,
 Gustav Boeder
 in the head
 Soumadau, whose name was Nihwe,
 shot by a firing squad of Melanesian soldiers
 along with the fourteen other warriors from
 Sokehs
 Soumadau, memorialized in the song

*Soumadau eri sapeng
 kumwail mahkeng kiht pwe sen
 kapwatada oh sahpw mehla*

I did not bring his photo

*Kalahngan to Hinemoana Baker for reading a
 draft of this poem. All photos taken by the author.*

W.E.M. AT LARC

ORRY

GE

MEMORY AS SELF-EMPOWERMENT

BEATRICE ANGUT OOLA
IN CONVERSATION
WITH MASEHO

Born in Hamburg, Maseho has spent the past thirty years working as a Black German multidisciplinary artist and curator, bringing together art, community, and cultural empowerment. She stands for consistency, style, and spiritual depth, and a form of memory that takes seriously collective and spiritual healing.

BEATRACE ANGUT OOLA: Maseho, it's so good to have you here. When you think of remembrance, what comes to mind first—and how would you describe your personal connection to Hamburg?

MASEHO: Allegorically speaking, Hamburg feels to me like an alluring yet ruthless former courtesan—now risen to the ranks of a respectable, upper-class Hanseatic lady doing everything in her power to conceal her disgraceful past. That image captures my ambivalent relationship with my birth city quite well. When I returned to Hamburg on my own in the early 1980s as a minor, I encountered pervasive racism and sexism—on every level. I felt completely lost. Over time, I met people who helped me endure life here. Above all, the Black clubs of that era meant everything to me. They weren't just

nightlife venues—they were cultural sanctuaries, informal community centres where I felt seen, understood, and held. Through my travels, my daughters, and my cultural—and inevitably socio-political—work, I also came to understand that I may not be a ‘Hamburger’ in the traditional sense, but I can, with confidence, call myself *Afro-Hanseatic*. What I still miss, however, is artistic inspiration. Hamburg—and arguably Germany as a whole—is at least thirty years behind when it comes to Afro and Black culture. This is evident in the absence of it in the discourse as well as in the creative diversity of our communities. There’s little space and recognition, few networks—but above all, an almost general lack of courage to engage meaningfully with Black cultural forms of expression.

For us as the African diaspora, memory is not something that should be in academic halls or sealed in archives. Memory is lived. We are, as many people, including Namibian Nama activist Sima Luipert so aptly put it, *living archives*. White people—and many Eurocentrically socialized people of colour—tend to think of archives as collections of documents, files, objects, and material things. In African and Afro-diasporic cultures, however, memories are also embedded in stories, in dance, in song, and in customs, and especially in the oral transmission of knowledge across generations.

Of course, we also maintain archives in the Western sense. But because each of us is a living archive—because memory is embodied, sensory, alive—we have the potential to break through these exclusive structures. At least momentarily when we come together with shared intention.

BEATRICE: You move across different cultural and political spaces, and collective memory plays a vital role in your work. How has Hamburg shaped you—as a city, as a stage, and as a contradiction?

MASEHO: I think many young people don't realize that we are, for the first time, witnessing the emergence of an older Black generation in Germany. When I was younger, I was always puzzled by the lack of elderly Black people we could talk to about their experiences. I was raised by my grandmother, and I also knew my great-grandmother. On my travels, I actively sought out conversations with elderly Black people—those between the ages of seventy to one hundred. These encounters were deeply meaningful to me.

In Germany, there is massive age discrimination, especially toward women—despite, or perhaps because of, the rapidly aging population.

This affects us as Black people as well. We need to ask ourselves: Is this hype around intergenerational conflict truly ours—or was it imposed on us? Given our distinct histories, perhaps we need entirely different generational frameworks.

Our political work is shaped by an imposed infantilization that keeps us small and disconnected. Every decade, the Black struggle seems to be reinvented from scratch, because there is so little awareness of what came before.

Many people don't know, for instance, that Katharina Oguntoye and May Ayim were met with hostility at their universities for researching Black history in Germany. Or that the capitalization of 'Black' was

proposed by Eleonore Coulibaly as early as 1992. There are countless such examples—enough to fill a book.

Personally, I still find it strange to be an old woman. As a Black woman, you're quickly erased.

You become invisible. Everyone—and I mean everyone—expects you to either be silent or die. But I will not be silent, as long as my voice goes unheard. Even though my strength is waning with age, the fight is only just beginning. Because the beautiful thing about growing older is this: you no longer let yourself be intimidated. You have nothing left to lose—except your life. And if that makes some call me a 'bitter old dragon'—so what?

BEATRICE: You often speak of Black women's movements. What role do they play in honouring the contributions of women of African descent in Germany and in the global Black diaspora?

MASEHO: The contributions of Black women in Germany are not being recognized—not in any meaningful way. This is not an isolated oversight; it's a structural issue replicated throughout the Western world. Germany is no exception.

Once in a while, a Black woman may receive media attention—usually framed as a 'model migrant'. But a collective recognition of Black women's contributions remains absent. Yet it was precisely Black women's movements that played a vital role in advancing discourses on critical whiteness, white supremacy, and intersectionality—understood as the interlocking of multiple systems of oppression. Even if the language has evolved over time, the pioneering analytical and political work of Black women is undeniable.

Though I've distanced myself from the ISD (Initiative of Black People in Germany) over the years, I always point out that it was founded by Black women and lesbians—a fact far too rarely acknowledged today. I remember the African women in Hamburg who were tired of being relegated to note-taking and catering duties in male-dominated African associations. They created their own organization: AWAH, the African Women Association Hamburg e.V. It didn't last long but it was a statement.

In Germany, terms like ‘migrant’, ‘Black’, or ‘African’ are still overwhelmingly associated with masculinity. I’ve been to numerous events where neither the mostly white organizers nor the audience noticed that Black women were entirely absent—even when the topic was African art or fashion.

That’s why I founded the Ukubona initiative—as a platform for Black women artists and designers. Because no matter what we do, as Black women, if we don’t publicly frame ourselves as ‘multiply marginalized’ and perform our suffering, we remain invisible.

Already in 1929, the Nardal sisters opened the Salon de Clamart in Paris—a space where Black intellectuals from around the world could gather. In the midst of colonialism, racism, and societal exclusion, the salon offered room for exchange, networking, and self-empowerment. Visitors included Marcus Garvey, Jean-Price Mars, Marian Anderson, and René Maran. It was also a haven for Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Léon Gontran Damas—later known as the founders of the Négritude movement.

Today, the Salon de Clamart is rightly celebrated as the birth-place of Négritude. Yet it is often forgotten who created that space in the first place: the Nardal sisters—especially Paulette Nardal, who launched the journal *La Revue du Monde Noir* and sparked essential debates around Black identity, diaspora, and the role of Black women. Though the journal lasted only a year, its legacy lives on—and continues to inspire the work we do today.

BEATRACE: In Hamburg, there are many blind-spots when it comes to colonial history and Black presence. What is needed for memory to become a lived practice?

MASEHO: Hamburg still harbours many blind spots regarding its colonial past and the historical and contemporary presence of Black people. Lived memory requires far more than symbolic gestures or one-off projects—it demands continuity and structural sustainability. Institutions too often engage in ‘cherry-picking’, inviting a few African voices while systematically excluding others. What’s missing is a holistic approach. Perspectives from the Caribbean, Latin America, and the US, for instance, are rarely included—even though these regions are essential to understanding Afro-diasporic history, resistance, and memory.

What we truly need is stronger financial and structural support for Afro-diasporic and Afro-Asian-Caribbean activists in Germany—especially to help foster connections with networks in other European countries. The German discourse is often insular, lacking the inspiration and critical impulses that come from transnational movements. Looking at struggles in other contexts could invite in urgently needed perspectives.

Events and workshops must not remain confined to academic or curatorial elites—they should be open and accessible to all. Only then can a broader societal engagement emerge. And it is crucial that local communities—particularly descendants

from regions directly impacted by Hamburg's colonial exploits—have a voice and decision-making power in these processes.

Finally, we must improve access to existing documentation and publications—such as materials from the 1990s related to the '500 Years of Conquest' or archives from institutions like the Heinrich Böll Foundation and city authorities. Much of this knowledge remains relevant but is hard to access. Memory culture needs not only new impulses but also the illumination of already existing knowledge so that collective memory can unfold as a living, resistant practice.

BEATRACE: When you look toward the future—what do you hope will be remembered of us?

MASEHO: I hope it will be remembered that:

We were here.

We loved.

We dreamed.

We triumphed.

We didn't just survive—we created spaces where we could flourish, shape the world, and reclaim control of the narrative.

I hope that our joy and our resilience are remembered—not just our pain.

DOING MEMORY
Testimonies of Collective
Memory in Artistic Practice

IBRAHIM MAHAMA

'A Short Century' is a lecture that traces the genesis of my artistic practice and poetics. The lecture has been held now at numerous international cultural institutions and aims to analyse some of my most defining works. In addition, the lecture specifically delves into my social commitment and collective activity at Red Clay studio in Tamale, Ghana, where, over the past few years, I have explored the social and economic issues affecting West Africa through socially embedded artistic practices. Ghana, which has only been independent for some sixty years, still bears the scars of its colonial past, the effects of which are evident in both the country's economic system and social structure. In this sense, historical memory and how new generations relate to it is pertinent. Themes such as mobility, 'weight', and the relationship between body and object are central to this discussion and are the registers through which I have reflected on how objects can carry traces of history, becoming testimonies of collective memory.

I often begin this lecture with a black-and-white photograph, taken in Ghana at the end of the nineteenth century, between 1893 and 1920, when the British Empire was building a national railway network, dubbed the Gold Coast Railways, now known as the Ghana Railway. The project, which began in the south of the country, immediately created new job opportunities and triggered a migration flow of labour from north to south. However, no extension was ever made to the north, and indeed, many people in Ghana have never seen

a train in person. I began to wonder what it would mean to take this historical form and bring it into a new geographical space, inserting it into a different context. What would the implications for collective memory be? How can everyday objects change when they are transformed and inserted into a different system of economic values and power, such as the art market?

The first objects I began to explore with this idea of mobility were contemporary goods, namely the raw jute sacks, which are originally produced in South East Asia, specifically in India and Bangladesh. These are usually imported beyond the border into West Africa by the Ghana Cocoa Board to transport cocoa. After their official use, the fabrics are sold to intermediaries who use them to transport goods of all kinds to markets, such as corn, charcoal, and other products. On the fabric, which gradually deteriorates and tears, various marks and inscriptions accumulate, testifying and telling the story of their incessant journey from one place to another. These marks accumulate and layer on top of each other, giving the fabric a new historical memory.

I developed an interest in this material during my trip to Burkina Faso. I stopped at the border for hours and encountered many long trucks carrying different goods across the border. I was fascinated by the idea that a material that has direct contact with people and represents society to a certain extent can take on different forms as it crosses borders. Indeed, this material symbolizes trade, labour, and capital. This is a political-economic issue and I see it as a significant material to work with. What interests me is seeing what happens to these sacks when they can no longer be used, when they reach the end of their life cycle, when society decrees that they are too obsolete and damaged to be used again and must be replaced. When objects reach this stage, they enter a new phase that could be defined as transcendental; they begin to develop almost 'spiritual' qualities. Objects acquire a new depth, offering new meanings. By recovering these jute sacks, I also transform their condition as objects, exploring what they can become. For my compositions, I use a wide range of materials, including jute sacks, archival documents, colonial and independence-era maps, sewing machines, shoeboxes, old railway tracks, and wooden doors. Then there are the carriages of locomotives and the fuselages of aeroplanes. These objects, in their structure and image, present symbols of both political and economic power. When I work around an object, I spend a lot of time analysing it conceptually, exploring it through photographs and drawings,

and imagining how to express and transform its potential and material. What interests me is the intersection between the abstract and the material that objects can create, going beyond my initial idea.

A fundamental aspect of my artistic research lies in the recovery and transportation of these objects from their place of origin to my studio. Sometimes, the objects I'm transporting are railway carriages or even entire aeroplanes, requiring the assistance of trucks and cranes,

as well as numerous collaborators. Some of these relocations—which I carefully monitor and document with photographs and videos throughout the process—can take anywhere from a few days to a week of travel. During this phase of work, it is interesting to observe not only the interaction between the objects and the places they pass through, but also the reactions of the local communities, many of whom have never seen, for example, an aeroplane. In particular, the younger generations are often encountering this technology for the first time. The journey, therefore, along with all its implications and logistical challenges, is a significant part of my practice, which is not limited to the mere final result, but embraces every stage of development and research, from collection to transportation, and up to the manipulation of objects and materials.

When these bodies arrive in the studio, they become alternative spaces to be occupied and experienced. The idea of reimagining the occupation

of space dates back to my university years when I dedicated myself to urban exploration of the area surrounding the city, where many buildings abandoned by the post-colonial community stand. Toward the end of colonialism and with the election of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, in 1957, the government promoted numerous construction projects throughout the country. Under the influence of the Soviet Union, many imposing brutalist and modernist monuments were built.

This fervent development was driven by the government's desire to promote industrialization in Ghana, particularly in the north of the country, where the economy was predominantly agricultural, based on the cultivation of raw materials such as corn and tomatoes. To achieve these goals, the government implemented a construction plan for factories, workshops, and silos. However, despite these efforts, Nkrumah was unable to meet the community's expectations and was deposed. Soon, these places, scattered throughout the urban fabric of the country, began to be abandoned and forgotten, becoming empty shells—symbols of a collective failure of a project for rebirth, of unfulfilled hopes, and unfinished utopias. My interest in architecture is not limited to its physical structure but extends to the interaction between objects and spaces, the materials, and the ecosystems within it.

My focus on labour also influences how I approach my studio. I've built a large studio complex that functions like a museum, where people can experience the work in its context. My studio, like the other parts of my practice, is strongly influenced by my own idea of what a work should do. I have converted and 'activated' a large architectural complex that functions as a museum, a meeting and exchange place where local communities and anyone can experience work in its context, as well as participate in the creation of installations. I am particularly interested in involving the different generations, who can find within it a space to experiment, explore, and create. Often, school groups come to the studio, where they draw or play with the objects they find. They interact with the materials. The work is inherently political because of the way it references politics in the ongoing context of nation-building and highlighting this in my art is a way to honour the contribution of countless individuals, both past and present, who make work possible.

THE PALAIS DE LOMÉ
Reinventing Natural and Cultural
Heritage to Celebrate Togolese and
African Creative Talents

SONIA LAWSON

Once a symbol of power, abandoned for twenty years, the former Governors' Palace and its adjoining park have been restored and transformed to become the Palais de Lomé. The project is a bold affirmation of forward-looking Togolese identity within a venue that is steeped in colonial history. Today the former colonial building has been transformed, severing ties with its exclusionary administrative past to present the best of Togolese and African creativity to the public.

The Palais came to existence through German Governor August Köhler's wish to make the new colonial capital visible from the sea. It was built over the course of seven years, from 1898 to 1905, under the direction of engineer Ferdinand Furtkamp. It was a symbol of power and prosperity of the German colony. The building first served as the German, and later French governors' residence. After decolonization, it became the seat of the Togolese Presidency until 1970. From 1976 to 1991, it became a residence for the diplomatic guests of the Republic of Togo, then the residence of the Prime Minister in October 1991. But over the course of the last two decades, the building was abandoned and deteriorated significantly. Since 2019, for the first time in its history, the previously forbidden seat of power has been made accessible to Togolese and foreign visitors after two decades of neglect.

The pillars of Palais de Lomé's mission are: to promote culture, whether artistic, culinary, scientific, or technical; to preserve a historical heritage; to share the richness of the exceptional natural environment in the heart of the capital; to be part of the education of future generations; and to participate in the development of Togo's economy and tourism

sector. Palais de Lomé offers exhibitions, live shows (dance, music, theatre, storytelling, puppets, circus), inviting artists from across Africa and its diasporas. Local communities are included in the programme of Palais de Lomé, which provide a channel for craftsmanship and local knowledge to manifest in the creation of our exhibitions and activities.

Celebrating the past while anchoring it in the contemporary present, the inaugural *Togo of the Kings* exhibition in 2019, for instance, was co-created with the local chieftancies and kingdoms. Most of the artefacts exhibited had never before left their original territories. Their current owners gave special permission for the artefacts to be displayed in public in the interest of sharing national heritage with a broad audience. The Palais team used non-conventional (at least, in comparison to Western museums) methods to exhibit some of the objects. For example, the Nassiet daml, a spiritual protection and power attribute of the customary chief of Djanguenan in northern Togo, was exceptionally loaned for the exhibition. This object was sent back to its community for certain ritual ceremonies for fifteen days, and then brought back to the Palais for the remainder of the exhibition.

The Palais has also consolidated its local roots: thanks to an intergenerational approach, the local audience is made up of young adults (mostly between the ages of 20 and 35) and of elderly people as well. We encourage exchange and dialogue across generations. Once, a young woman visiting the Palais de Lomé came across a picture of her grandmother, back in the sixties. She returned with her grandmother to visit the exhibition, where, in front of the picture, the grandmother told captivating stories about her youth and that era.

The park around the Palais is the only urban park in coastal West Africa located in the city centre, on the seafront. Palais staff are working to bring the park's wealth of flora and fauna to a wider public, notably through workshops, and are strengthening links with the university, particularly in

the fields of botany and entomology. For example, the park is home to the hives of stingless bees, a species endemic to Africa and South America but little known to the Togolese public. Also on offer are introductory sessions in the traditional use of plants (medicine, dyeing, soaps). Ornithological walks through the park are an opportunity to admire many species of birds—forty one have been counted to date by ornithologists.

In keeping with our mission to educate children about art and biodiversity, we welcome thousands of pupils. Free access for public schools, and the fact that the Palais pays for their transport, enables us to reduce access barriers. This collaboration has been met with support, and even enthusiasm, from teachers who have been able to broaden their pupils' knowledge of issues that are often marginal in the school curriculum, namely art education and the discovery of biodiversity.

THOUGHTS ON A
DECOLONIAL CITY TOUR

LINO AGBALAKA &
JESSICA ZIADA KÖRP

A decolonial city tour throws a different light on urban history. It weaves historical fragments, memories, and decolonial legacies to make them accessible to both flaneurs and those with an interest in history. Counter-narratives and critical cartographies are long overdue, and the time is ripe to bring these perspectives to a broader public. We also see them as an extension of history class in schools and a way to promote critical thinking amongst young people.

Which colonial continuities can be read in the urban space? Which forms of resistance serve to oppose forgetting and enable a multidimensional form of remembrance? Which local phenomena point to the complex entanglements of colonial activities? We want to explore these and further questions—and provide answers based on concrete places and examples in a number of German cities.

At the centre are the colonial traces inscribed in our cities, as well as the visibility of decolonial resistances and achievements. For us, remembering does not simply mean preserving, but also creating active spaces in which history can be read anew and where we can engage with the pluralist past.

Remembering as Starting Point

When we developed the idea for a decolonial city tour, we asked ourselves what determines the discourse on the culture of remembrance in Germany, what should it aim to achieve, and with what resources. We first realized

that there is not just one but many, sometimes overlapping, cultures of remembrance, including personal and familial, local, occupation- or branch-specific, and national. In this context, remembering serves different functions: it can generate, stabilize, or preserve—particularly within knowledge institutions, education, and the political order. These functions decisively shape how and what is remembered—and, above all, what is not remembered. It is precisely here that our project starts: it aims not only to make gaps visible but also to name the ghosts of colonialism that haunt our everyday lives to this day—sometimes openly, sometimes subtly. Remembrance culture is itself historically situated and has its own traditions that can be drawn on, both today and in the future.

Remembering as a Praxis of Visibility, Participation, and Accessibility

With our project, we aimed to leave a lasting impression that informs participants about their immediate surroundings and its colonial history, while simultaneously promoting a critical, questioning attitude towards Germany's role in historical colonialism. We asked ourselves how our goals and methods relate to what is commonly understood as the 'German culture of remembrance'. Another important question was what goals this culture pursues and whether they have been realized. We sought answers not merely within academic discourse but through concrete praxis—through our own experiences and the reactions of those around us. In the process, we recognized that remembrance culture not only serves public education and identity formation but also, beyond this, influences the concrete behaviour of the people who engage with it.

The content of remembrance culture ranges from positively connoted themes, such as cultural achievements or historical anniversaries, to the often-suppressed chapters of violence, war, and colonial oppression. Alongside the accessibility of knowledge, it involves active participation—both from the general public and from those directly involved—in the collaborative shaping of decolonial remembrance.

We are aware that we, too, are not free from mechanisms of exclusion. That is why we always ask ourselves: Whose memory is being negotiated? Who is speaking? Who is being heard—and who is listening? Decolonial remembrance does not follow a linear logic—it is fragmented, polyvocal, contradictory.

Urban Space as Memory Carrier: Walk, See, Contextualize

For us, a central component of the praxis of decolonial remembrance is consciously moving through the urban space—walking, pausing, and observing concrete sites where knowledge and memories are either visible or deliberately made invisible. Our city tours include six stations per city—at each, fundamental questions can be addressed in just a few minutes: What can be seen here? What relevance does this place have in a decolonized urban history? Drawing on historical remembrance practices—such as street names, representative buildings, or burial places—we engage with existing forms of place marking in order to critically contextualize them. It is important for us not to bypass the community in these activities, but for local protagonists to be integrated, alliances forged, and spaces for exchange created through talks with experts and workshops. These can be seen as a form of peer-to-peer review—a collaborative comparison that not only examines the content but also makes thematic repetitions between cities fruitful—for example, the traces of seventeenth-century African philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo, which can be found in various locations across Germany. In this way, remembering becomes a moving, collective praxis—open to a diversity of perspectives, contextualization, and contradiction.

LINO AGBALAKA & JESSICA ZIADA KÖRP

Open Questions, Open Process

Our city tour can be understood as an attempt to generate spaces for the development and discussion of an active culture of remembrance within the public sphere. Through collectively walking through the urban space and making colonial traces visible, we aim to make remembrance palpable as both a cognitive and a physical-spatial praxis. In the process, we do not rely on a consensus politics of remembrance; rather, we grasp remembrance as a contested terrain, and thus the possibility of asking questions instead of simply giving answers.

Our reflections on existing German cultures of remembrance—particularly those associated with the Shoah—have strengthened our resolve to rely not on shock, mourning, or moral authority, but on contextualization, historical-material connectivity, and active personal and communal engagement. When remembrance is primarily mediated through narratives, monuments, or official commemoration days determined by the state, it leaves little room for collective self-questioning or social praxis beyond the official politics of remembrance, and its transformative potential remains limited.

State-led remembrance culture has always been a highly political praxis, directed less at the past than shaping present and future activities. For us, this means critically questioning the political positioning of projects such as ours. What attitude do state actors currently take towards European colonialism? What responsibilities do we assume as project initiators? And what concrete implications does this have for the realization, mediation, and further development of our work?

The answers to these questions are open—and it is precisely herein that our task lies: viewing remembrance not as a finished narrative but as a process shaped by many voices, experiences, and conflicts. We hope our contribution encourages people to see remembering as something collective, mobile, and incomplete, and to create spaces in which learning is possible.

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

LEARNING BY DOING
Building a Black Library

BEATRACE ANGUT OOLA
IN CONVERSATION
WITH MILLICENT ADJEI

BEATRACE ANGUT OOLA:

What was the original impulse to found ARCA (Afrikanisches Bildungszentrum, African Learning Center) and the Fasiathek?

MILLICENT ADJEI: We founded the non-profit association in Hamburg in 2010/11 focusing on empowerment and critically questioning the term 'integration'. We asked ourselves whether integration really meant participation—or whether it was more about assimilation into the majority society. We developed various formats such as discussion rounds, political events, and exhibitions that addressed these very topics so that people could actively participate. We also collaborated with other African organizations and initiatives in Hamburg. Within the framework of the UN Decade for people of African Descent (2015–25), we sought to break through the dominant historical narrative with our own

perspectives. The initial idea was to create a Black archive—a Black authors' library in Hamburg. In the beginning, we had neither the financial resources nor our own space. But we started systematically collecting books by Black authors and spreading the word through our personal networks. In 2020, the opportunity arose to use a space in the fux cooperative (formerly Viktoria-Kaserne). Funding remains difficult, but thanks to the support of volunteers and certain groups we were able to build the archive.

The Fasiathek is a low-threshold reference library that strives to be accessible to all. We deliberately focus on Black perspectives and alternative systems of knowledge instead of reproducing the classic categorizations of conventional libraries. Our collection includes books in many European as well as African languages, and we value the diversity of formats: novels, non-fiction, multimedia works, translations.

What is central to us is making Black histories visible and tangible from within—without having them generalized, objectified, or narrated by others.

BEATRICE: How do you work with memories, cultural heritage, biographies, and everyday knowledge in the Fasiathek? What role do oral tradition, artistic practices, or collective remembrance play in your formats?

MILLICENT: It makes a decisive difference whether I tell my own story and represent my own perspective or whether someone else does it. That is precisely why it was important for us to make Black perspectives visible and present. Much of what I learnt from a white-European viewpoint about Black histories was either inaccurate or incomplete. With the Fasiathek, we created a space in which Black, Afro-diasporic, and African voices are at the centre. Anyone can come, read, compare, and engage with Black perspectives. Our collection reflects the multilingualism of the African continent and its diasporas. Many Black authors write in French, English, Portuguese, Spanish, or German—languages shaped by colonial history. At the same time, more and more works are being translated into, or written directly in, African languages. We find this especially important: to be able to read in one's mother tongue opens up new pathways to knowledge.

We also consciously refuse the classic categorizations of conventional libraries since Black authors often weave knowledge into novels or hybrid literary forms. Instead, we organize the library solely by author, setting a clear signal for an alternative system of knowledge.

Beyond reading, oral transmission and artistic practice play a central role. We host readings and poetry, music, and storytelling events. We see podcasts as a modern extension of oral tradition: people narrate and record their stories and these are then made accessible to others. What matters most, however, is that not just a single voice is heard, but many different ones. That way it becomes clear that we are heterogeneous and yet share common ground. In this way, we resist the danger of the 'single story', as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has described it. Every story is subjective and unique and it is precisely in this diversity that the strength of Black memory culture lies.

BEATRICE: How does your work connect with practices of memory and archives on the African continent or in other diasporas, and what forms of knowledge circulate between these spaces? How do they influence your work in Germany?

MILLICENT: It is especially meaningful when authors whose lives and socialization are rooted in the African continent visit us in Germany and engage critically with historical and current themes. These voices are absolutely invaluable. They inspire us, open up new perspectives, and remind us that none of us are free from the influence of our own socialization here in Germany. It is vital to make many voices heard and create spaces for multiple narratives. It is not the single voice that counts, but all of them together. The strength lies in listening, in mutual inspiration, and in collective storytelling. At the same time, we aim to disrupt the widespread prejudice that people on the African continent are not interested in their colonial history. That is simply not true. Anyone engaging with literature by Africans quickly sees that there is intense critical reflection as it pertains to these histories. And yet this false narrative persists. We must also recognize that people live under different conditions. Someone who is hungry cannot occupy themselves with politics; they are focused on survival. This holds true everywhere. So it is natural that not everyone has the same level of knowledge or the same urgency to engage deeply. But this is precisely why our work is so important: we create spaces where different perspectives are heard, voices that tell more than the official, generalized stories that appear in schoolbooks or are validated by supposed authorities. It is not easy work—but it is our motivation and our stance.

BEATRACE: What structural hurdles do Black institutions face when they engage in remembrance work and what would need to change so that Black, Afro-diasporic, African memory work is taken seriously and sustainably established?

MILLICENT: Every time we invite authors from the African continent, it becomes evident how strongly systemic inequalities operate. While some people can travel without difficulty, others face immense barriers: expensive visa applications, complicated bureaucratic procedures, and often the visa is denied in the end. The money is lost. For me, this system is an expression of a capitalist mechanism that preserves inequality. As an institution, one is constantly forced to position oneself to perform and to prove one's legitimacy in order to be taken seriously. The core issue is this: the assumption still prevails that only the voices of those with certain academic titles count. This automatically devalues other perspectives. If, for example, a housewife's opinion is dismissed because she is 'only' a housewife, that is unacceptable. For she, too, can contribute political arguments that are deeply relevant to society as a whole. Every voice that shares experiences or suggests new ways forward is important and enriching. This denial of value is what we must break.

It is of course easier to stick to what has always been done: Professor X has done this research, therefore only his results count. But we know very well that every piece of research stems from a subjective standpoint—a thesis to be confirmed or challenged. I can find books that support my thesis, and others that contradict it. That only one position is then treated as objective and thereby validated is deeply problematic. It denies individuals outside the academic system their knowledge, their experience, and their authority to interpret. It implies that we are incapable.

I believe our experiences, perspectives, and narratives to be immensely valuable. They continue the tradition of oral storytelling, which is a central element of African knowledge systems. Knowledge is not only passed on through books or lectures but also through storytelling, through sharing lived experience—sometimes in everyday situations, like sitting peacefully under a tree, or during casual conversation.

And this is where an interesting rupture in narratives emerges: In the past, Africans were disparaged as ‘lazy’ for sitting under trees. Today, I read in management magazines about how vital it is to take breaks, to pause, to practice *niksen* (Dutch for doing nothing) in order to think clearly again. What was once devalued is now hyped in the US or Europe. This example shows how knowledge systems are hierarchized and distorted, and why it is so crucial to take our own forms of knowledge and experience seriously and make them visible.

BEATRICE: What role does decolonizing public space play in memory work?

MILLICENT: Decolonizing public space is both vital and necessary. Renaming streets can serve as a beginning, as a visible sign that reflects the diversity of society. At its core, it is about shifting perspectives. The communities concerned must be actively involved in this process, since they carry knowledge and lived experience. In doing so, the remembrance of anti-colonial resistance fighters can be honoured and made known.

For example, an information plaque should be installed that explains what the street was previously called, why it was renamed, who is now being commemorated, and who initiated the renaming process. Such visible markers ensure that everyone—including visitors and tourists—has the opportunity to engage with this history, to ask questions, and to continue their own research. Street renamings signal that society is willing to confront its colonial past and its present critically. They demonstrate responsibility, accountability, and recognition. For the communities affected, such acts can also bring a measure of healing on multiple levels. As Paul Gilroy, the British sociologist and cultural theorist, has noted, renaming streets can be understood as a form of *symbolic reparation*, sparking political and historical consciousness and encouraging broader awareness.

MEM WOR SHOP

MEMORY IN MOTION

During *Memory in Motion*, a series of workshops led by experts took place, during which participants explored places of learning and remembrance in the context of colonialism through interdisciplinary discussions and best-practise examples. Reports follow below.

HOW ARI CAME TO US

Workshop by
NHU Y NGUYEN &
NATALY JUNG-HWA HAN

Since 2009, the Korea Verband's working group 'Comfort Women' has carried out educational and public-relations work and organized political campaigns aimed at raising awareness about comfort women in Germany. Its members are from Congo, Germany, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and other countries. During the Asia-Pacific War (1931–45), the Japanese military abducted an estimated 200,000 girls and women from its colonies and occupied territories, taking them to war zones where they were forced into sexual slavery to serve the troops. It was only in 1991 that Kim Hak-soon, a survivor of the comfort women system from South Korea, broke silence on the matter publicly. More than one thousand affected women from fourteen countries followed her example and spoke out. This resulted in a global 'comfort women' movement, which continues to call for justice for these women. Since 1992, a demonstration has been held every Wednesday in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul. In 2011, on the occasion of the one thousandth demonstration, the first peace statue was unveiled in Berlin. In Berlin, a lengthy process led to the installation of the Ari peace statue. The application was submitted on 19 February 2020, and approved on 6 July. The planned installation date of 14 August 2020 had to be postponed due to the construction of a drinking fountain and gas line repairs. On 10 August 2020, following an amendment, a new date was set and the unveiling was planned for World Peace Day, 21 September 2020. This date was postponed to 28 September to allow the district office to attend. The unveiling took place on that day. However, on 7 October 2020, the special permit was revoked and the statue was removed on 14 October 2020.

Why 'Ari'? In Armenian, *Ari* means 'The Brave'. The Armenian struggle for recognition of the genocide carried out by Turkey displays parallels with the activism of the comfort women movement, particularly in terms of global networking.

The rejection of the application to extend the special use of the Peace Statue from 30 September 2024 is characterized by its bureaucratic and even violent language, which obscures the commitment of Berlin's citizens. The 'Comfort Women' working group collected 3,000 signatures in the district in favour of preserving the Peace Statue, and there were five BVV resolutions in favour of preservation as well. In this process, the responsible authorities were able to acquire the community's knowledge of urban tenders for art competitions. Instead of citing foreign policy reasons (i.e., relations between Germany and Japan), the decision provisionally invokes special use laws for public space. Laws are 'invented' by the district office, such as suddenly backdated laws regarding a maximum of two years' special use for art in public space on the district office's website, which were not previously known to the public. It also claims to have proposed three alternative locations, which were allegedly rejected by the applicant; however, these locations were never communicated to the applicant.



The language used in the rejection notice is emphatically beaurocratic—‘planning authority’, ‘will of the legislature’. In contrast to a supposedly ‘universal’ interest, the Peace Statue is portrayed as a particular interest. Words like ‘tolerance’ are taken from racist migration legislation, and the idea that ‘diversity’ can only be achieved through a public competition is neoliberal language.

On the one hand, all of this refocuses attention on the perspective of the majority society, in which this topic remains relatively unknown; on the other hand, Germany’s responsibility for the Second World War is rendered invisible.

The members of the advisory committee who oversee funding decisions of the district authority eventually withdrew financing for the ‘Comfort Women’ working group’s education project. The working group has since initiated two sets of legal actions in response to both the slashing of the funding for the education project and the rejection notice.

Report by Marc Sebastian Eils

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

INSTITUTIONALIZATION
AND CONSOLIDATION OF
COORDINATION CENTRES
Opportunities and Hurdles
in Reappraisal Processes

Workshop by
BRENDA DAVINA

More and more German cities are engaging with their colonial past. A key approach in this process is the establishment of coordination offices that guide and manage these efforts both organizationally and in terms of content. These offices facilitate the long-term consolidation of decolonizing processes in public administration and society. They promote the visibility of marginalized perspectives, especially those of people of colour, and make important contributions to remembrance culture. Furthermore, they serve as a point of contact for protagonists from civil society, public administration, and academia.

This workshop provided space to share experiences, discuss challenges, and develop guidelines and courses of action for the realization of coordination offices. Participants in the workshop included representatives from advisory committees, coordination offices, civil-society initiatives, museums, and public administration—such as Decolonize Berlin, Afrotopia, Arbeitskreis Postkolonial, Salon International e. V., MARKK, the German Federal Cultural Foundation, and ARCA (Afrikanisches Bildungszentrum).

Background in Hannover: Coordination Office for Colonial Heritage

The coordination office Colonial Heritage in Hannover was established following a public hearing in 2022 and a motion submitted by the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party in 2023. The office is situated within the city administration's Department for Remembrance Culture and is conceived as a permanent agency. Its primary goal is to develop a comprehensive remembrance concept for the decolonization of Hannover. Since last year, the office has coordinated an advisory committee composed of representatives from civil society, politics, and public administration. The work of the coordination office can be broken down into three main areas: African history, empowerment, and museums and public space. A central focus lies in knowledge transfer within Hannover's civil society to raise awareness of the work of the coordination office and actively involve communities. At the same time, efforts are underway to establish a network connecting initiatives from urban and rural regions within Lower Saxony, thus generating

synergies. In Berlin, the coordination office is anchored in civil society, while in Hannover it is situated within the city administration. Challenges arising from the embedding of the office within the administration include concerns within civil society that demands will be watered down or not implemented, and that difficulties will arise via complex administrative language and lengthy processes. Those responsible within the administration must be conscious of their mandate and demonstrate sensitivity to these themes. At the same time, a greater understanding of the complexity of administrative processes is required within civil society.

Addressing Target Groups

The decolonization work of coordination offices requires the selective identification and engagement of various target groups from communities, diasporas, companies, institutions, museums, memorial sites, politics, public administration, and German majority society. It also calls for a greater emphasis on memorials as cooperation partners, the promotion of a multiperspectival culture of remembrance, and collective reflection on how anti-Semitism and racism can be jointly combatted. In particular, young people from African countries who come to Germany to study or work often take a critical view to engagements with German colonial history, as it is considered to have little relevance to their lived realities, and they are faced with completely different challenges and hurdles within the German system. Establishing a greater connection between colonial history and contemporary lived reality is necessary in order to reach these groups.

Influence of the Coordination Offices

Responsibilities and limits of authority must be clearly defined in order to establish the extent to which political decision-making processes and laws can be influenced, and to ensure that discussions lead to concrete changes. It is only in this way that coordination offices can effectively realize their goals and initiate lasting change. An additional central challenge concerns the delegation of tasks between public administration and civil society. Responsibility is frequently shifted to civil society under the assumption that this completes the process. Here, efficient and sustainable cooperation among civil-society initiatives, coordination offices, and the administration must be established. Transparency and the visualization of advancements and processes are necessary to meet the expectations of

political actors and civil society, to build trust within communities, and to make the processes comprehensible to all participants. Formation of a national coordination network is needed to develop uniform guidelines and strengthen communication at the national level.

Knowledge Transfer and Networking

A further important point is knowledge transfer and networking among universities, civil society, and public administration in order to deepen engagement with colonial history and to include the perspectives of people of colour in the transfer of knowledge. Regarding the promotion of changes in perspective and participative approaches, the creation of discursive spaces to actively involve different communities and the majority society in the decolonization processes was discussed. This is particularly relevant for institutions such as museums and memorials. Examples include municipal ‘speed-dating’ formats that bring together initiatives and protagonists from civil society to encourage dialogue and networking. Furthermore, the development of target-group-specific formats for decolonization in areas such as administration, politics, and business is important in order to close knowledge gaps and adjust content to specific contexts. Initiatives to decolonize academia that focus on making colonial and racist structures and attitudes visible in order to research and dismantle them are already active within the academic community.

BRENDA DAVINA

Decolonization of Town Twinning

The development of joint approaches to engaging with history in former colonies and the design of reciprocal learning processes can be achieved through knowledge exchange and the sharing of expertise instead of traditional development aid and symbolic gestures, which do nothing to change structural asymmetries.

Report by Donata Langenbacher

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

MAPPING SHARK ISLAND

Workshop by
**MARK MUSHIVA &
ASHKAN CHEHELTAN**

The workshop *Mapping Shark Island* began with a brief introduction to the film *Shark Island*, produced by Forensis and Forensic Architecture in collaboration with the Nama Traditional Leaders Association (NTLA) and the Ovaherero Traditional Authority (OTA). The aim of the film was to support activist initiatives that focus on the recognition and remembrance of the atrocities committed during the German colonial genocide in Namibia, particularly on Shark Island (Naminus). Through forensic methods and digital reconstructions, the film seeks to highlight both the historical violence of the genocide and the contemporary struggles of the affected communities.

The introduction was followed by a screening that provided a visual and immersive experience conceived to connect participants to the brutal history of Shark Island, which served as a death camp for thousands of Herero and Nama people between 1905–7. The film also gave the participants a glimpse into the ongoing fight for justice and recognition, bringing forward both archival material and personal testimonies from the descendants of survivors.

The film recounts the historical events that transpired on Shark Island, focusing on the genocide that occurred between 1905–7. It brings to light the inhumane treatment of the Herero and Nama peoples by German colonial forces, detailing their forced labour, starvation, executions, and the systematic erasure of their remains. The island became a place of extermination, where victims were often discarded into the sea or buried in shallow graves, their histories deliberately forgotten by colonial powers.

Forensic Architecture uses digital modeling and spatial analysis to uncover the layered histories of violent sites like Shark Island. This methodology allows for the reconstruction of both the physical structures as well as the experiences of the people who lived through these horrors. The film's immersive style was particularly effective in helping participants experience the island as if they were witnesses to its violent past. By seeing digital models of the island, participants could engage with the spatial aspects of the site's history. The immersive

experience was further enhanced by the film's sound design, which included the sounds of wind, thunder, and crashing waves—evoking the harsh conditions of the island and the overwhelming sense of violence and death that pervaded the location.

This sensory approach made the historical events feel immediate and visceral, bringing the past into the present.

Whose memories matter?

The movie offers a crucial platform for the affected communities, allowing them to share their history from their own perspective. By giving voice to the descendants of survivors, the film centres their experiences, highlighting the presence of the past in their ongoing struggle for justice and recognition. This approach creates a foundation for a decolonized memory culture that rewrites the colonial narrative and aims at a future of memories that acknowledges the injustices and violence of German colonialism. In a critical examination of the present, the workshop also explored the current development of 'green energy' infrastructure in Namibia, particularly the German-Namibian projects focused on hydrogen production. These developments, which include the expansion of ports and industrial areas, are seen as a continuation of colonial exploitation, as they threaten not only the biodiversity of the land but also the preservation of sites like Shark Island. The economic drive behind these projects raises questions about whose interests are prioritized and whether Namibian communities will truly benefit from the green energy revolution. At the same time, these developments risk further erasing the painful history of the genocide, with the island's memorials and historical significance being pushed aside in favour of industrial growth. This juxtaposition between the erasure of history and the pursuit of economic gain is a key tension in the debate over how Namibia's past should be remembered—and who controls that narrative.

Following the film screening, Sima Luipert and Maboss Ortmann, who were close collaborators on the project and emphasized the long process of working together with communities, rather than simply extracting

information, were invited onto the stage. Both Luipert and Ortmann spoke about the importance of telling history from a non-Eurocentric perspective, asserting that descendants of survivors must have the opportunity to share their stories on their own terms. Their message reinforced the ongoing struggle for justice.

The discussion then delved into several critical issues, beginning with the legacy of German colonial history. Participants highlighted the powerful role that digital reconstructions and virtual spaces play in preserving memory and creating a platform for learning. The digital models, such as

the one created for Shark Island, serve as compelling tools to both memorialize and educate about the violent past, offering a new methodology for engaging with colonial histories.

One key point of debate was the competing cultural economies in Namibia, particularly the ways in which both the Namibian and German governments engage with the legacy of the genocide. While the Namibian government emphasizes the liberation struggle, the genocide itself is often overshadowed, creating a complex dynamic between remembering the past and promoting national narratives. This tension is further complicated by the German government's reluctance to fully engage with its colonial history, which continues to shape the present-day politics of memory.

The conversation also turned to colonial continuities, again with the mention of the development of green energy projects. While these projects are framed as environmentally beneficial, participants questioned whether they represent another form of exploitation that reinforces colonial practices. German companies, in collaboration with the Namibian government, are pushing forward with large-scale industrial ventures. The discussion raised the question of who truly benefits from these projects and whether Namibians are being excluded from decision-making processes concerning their land and resources. The issue of responsibility was central to the conversation: how can both governments—German and Namibian—be held accountable for preserving the memory of the genocide, and for ensuring that the voices of marginalized communities are included in the shaping of their future?

Report by Raphael Steinwandel

EMBODIED SITES OF
COLONIAL MEMORY
Citizenship's Feminized Others

Workshop by
MANUELA BOATCĂ,
ISABELLE IHRING,
TANJA OSTOJIĆ
& JULIA ROTH

In her contribution to the *Memory in Motion* workshop, Manuela Boatcă spoke about unequal citizenship or the ‘coloniality of citizenship’, which borrows from Aníbal Quijano’s concept of the ‘coloniality of power’ developed in the 1990s. Even if countries have achieved independence from colonial rule, Quijano discussed how the hierarchies put in place by colonialism and shaped by labour regimes, gender, and racialization remain. Colonial relations of power persist in different forms of inequality, including citizenship. The Henley Passport Index, for example, shows how unequal the world is based on annual passport rankings. Today, citizenship is ‘sold’ to the highest bidder, mainly wealthy men. The workshop focused on how women and feminized others have historically been the most vulnerable migrants, especially those who are not wealthy. It examined how women and feminized others often embody mobility by anchoring their strategy of moving in their own bodies, either by offering the possibility to their children to be born in a country that confers citizenship or by migrating under the terms of someone who is interested in their body, not necessarily as a form of sex tourism but as a transaction based on sexual favours that can become a condition of migration.

Julia Roth’s contribution focused on migration and citizenship in the Americas, with a particular emphasis on gendered aspects, which Quijano did not consider. She identified continuities in the trafficking of women, including the exchange of women between colonizers and colonized men; sex and romance tourism; and forms of mobility generated through erotic capital and childbirth, which transfers mobility to the next generation. For example, if a child is born on US territory, they acquire certain citizenship rights, and at the age of twenty-one they can also give citizenship to their parents—which is at odds with Donald Trump’s plans to end birthright citizenship through an executive order on day one of his presidency. At the same time, wealthy women are often free to visit and settle in the United States.

Tanja Ostojić presented her radical artistic works from the early 2000s that dealt with questions of migration, undocumented border crossings, and marriage for citizenship papers, which the artist experienced herself in 2000, from which she created the project *Looking for a Husband with EU Passport*. Her contribution highlighted the fragility of gender in the context of migration, including in situations that are not typically considered

colonial. One participant asked whether Ostojić had considered the aspect of desirability in *Looking for a Husband with EU Passport*. Who responded to her advertisement offering herself to marry someone with an EU passport? Ostojić explained that the project was meant to spark discussion on the political topic on a platform for people to share their different experiences in the form of a visual or text contribution. In the end, she married a person who fully understood the project and who wanted to support her right to freedom of movement.

Isabelle Ihring spoke about female genital mutilation as gender-specific reason for asylum. Some participants who identified themselves as Argentinian activists said that concepts of gender and race are products of modernity, and that *white* citizenship has historically been constructed in binary terms. They argued for the importance of understanding citizenship in a more contextualized way. The challenge is to think of citizenship from an anti-colonial, anti-racist, and multi-gender perspective. This requires transversal engagement across different viewpoints and dismantling barriers through an intersectional approach to rethink practices from our privileged point of view.

Other participants agreed on the importance of exploring these possibilities for transforming how we think about belonging and how citizenship is about being present and existing in a space rather than being included. At the same time, as long as being in a place needs to be negotiated with institutions designed to include some and exclude others, tensions will persist. Considering how most countries have seen few progressive steps towards the official recognition of different gender identities in passports, the institution of citizenship is grappling on an international scale with its origins in the wake of the French revolution, when it was limited to propertied, literate men; everyone else was required to derive their citizenship through their relationship to such men. These relations were created to sustain citizenship as a logic of exclusion. As long as citizenship remains organized in this way, policies will not be progressive enough to accommodate those currently excluded from its framework.

Report by Melissa Makele

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

MEMORY IN A WORLD
TO BECOME
Memory Work in the
Medium-Term Future

Workshop by
ANUJAH FERNANDO

In light of increasing conservative and right-wing pressure on national remembrance narratives, this workshop, held in German, addressed the question of how memory work on issues of migration, colonialism, and racism should position itself in the medium term. The goal was to preserve the transnational perspectives and international networks that civil society built up over many years. Following a short introduction, freelance cultural scientist and curator Anujah Fernando opened the room for an initial exchange in small groups, where participants could introduce themselves. Participants were invited to present a central resource they could contribute to decolonial and anti-racist memory work and struggles for remembrance. Participants from Berlin, Hamburg, Hannover, and Munich identified both highly individual capabilities—such as empathy, personal networks, or work with children and young people—and their strong engagement within cultural, culture-supporting, and political institutions, as well as civil-society groups.

In the following plenary session, participants discussed the discursive and political threats and challenges currently confronting remembrance

work. Most contributions focused on existing or anticipated underfunding and cuts to cultural budgets. The production of critical knowledge had been especially affected by these cuts. Statutory posts for equal rights and against discrimination remained unfilled, and laws that have already been passed cannot be implemented due to a lack of financial resources. Participants suspected that a conservative, reactionary political agenda underpinned these budget consolidations. The situation has given rise to concerns that the cuts may intensify the struggle for resources within existing networks. The hard-won advances of recent years thus appear fragile, while personal threats, both verbal and physical, have increased in the context of growing racism and anti-Semitism. In addition to these existential challenges, participants also debated whether the creation of sites of remembrance and the renaming of streets was contributing to a de-politicization of decolonial memory work. There was a danger that such sites could become so central to remembrance culture that other forms would receive less attention.

The subsequent discussion addressed questions of whom memory culture is actually directed towards, who the counterparts in memory work are, and what might strengthen their activities. The discussion of the results

was brief but full of insights. Without attempting to define in detail whether a clear distinction between addressee and sender can be drawn within remembrance culture, participants emphasized that it is directed at everyone—both current and future generations, and perhaps even past generations. Through understanding and engaging with the past, valuable lessons can be drawn for our future and the voices of earlier generations can be heard.

In discussing the question of who the counterparts in decolonial memory work are, participants initially emphasized that they were not the same ‘allies’. Allied activists and civil-society organizations can function as amplifiers by underlining the importance of specific concerns or by calling for more intensive engagement. Making use of the power of institutions of memory culture, even when this is associated with challenges, remains crucial. Awareness of where decisions are made and how influence can be exerted supports the realization of one’s own projects. Similarly, contact with the media and effective lobbying work can be of great importance. In some cases, legal action may also be necessary to advance decolonial remembrance culture.

To strengthen decolonial memory work, it is important to emphasize that there should be no competition between different aspects of remembrance culture. Instead, the task is to create common spaces in which an empathetic approach to one another can be cultivated. This involves promoting trans-cultural, intersectional, and multiperspectival approaches within decolonial and anti-racist memory work as well as in education as a whole in order to foster an inclusive society. In light of limited resources and politically motivated funding cuts, many participants pointed to the importance of reducing dependence on state funding. The creation and strengthening of autonomous financing models and (infra)structures were seen as key for the long-term realization of concrete visions. Achieving this requires alliances and the institutionalization of different voices within the remembrance discourse through associations and civil-society organizations.

The workshop highlighted the enormous challenges confronting the development of memory work in the medium term. At the same time, the open exchange raised awareness of the need to strengthen national and transnational networks and to develop common strategies in order to maintain the vigour of existing decolonial remembrance culture.

Report by Simon Goeke

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
Ovaherero People's Memorial and
Reconstruction Foundation

Workshop by
JEPHTA NGUHERIMO

1. Full Formal Apology

The German government's persistent denial of the genocide committed against the Ovaherero people between 1904 and 1908 continues to retraumatize the descendants of the victims and survivors. To heal these wounds, Germany must issue a formal and unambiguous apology directly to the descendants. The state must cease its threat of issuing a formal apology solely in the historical context. Such a statement will not help with the healing process and may further fuel the grievances of the descendants.

Thus, the Ovaherero People's Memorial and Reconstruction Foundation (OPMRF) demands that Germany offer a full and unambiguous apology to the descendants. The apology must be formally endorsed by the Bundestag and include a clear explanation of the crimes committed.

2. Reparations

The German colonial government destroyed the cultural and sociopolitical institutions of the Ovaherero people after the war by denying them ownership of properties such as land and cattle as well as the right to assembly to reconstruct their society. The German government forcefully confiscated land, cattle, goats, and horses that belonged to the Ovaherero and gave them to German settlers.

Thus, the OPMRF demands that the current German government pay reparations to the Ovaherero people for the loss of properties, land, and cattle, at the current market value of the goods that were taken from them.

3. Restitution

German colonial officials, settlers, and visitors looted cultural artefacts, robbed sacred cemeteries, killed and maimed individuals, and exported human remains that are currently housed in universities and museums in Germany, the US, France, and elsewhere.

Thus, the OPMRF demands that the German government commit to the repatriations of the stolen artefacts and human remains that were taken without the consent of the Ovaherero people.

4. Resettlement

The German colonial troops were under Lothar von Trotha's infamous extermination order, which explicitly stated that 'within the German borders every Herero, with or without a gun, with or without cattle, will be shot'. As a result, many Ovaherero people fled east to Angola, Botswana, and South Africa. The survivors of the genocide lived in their host countries as refugees who fled persecution. Many survivors and their descendants yearn to return to their home country, present-day Namibia.

Thus, the OPMRF demands that the German government fund a programme of resettlement of the descendants of the survivors who wish to return to Namibia. Furthermore, it must commit to and jointly develop a programme of financial rehabilitation for the descendants who return by constructing health facilities, schools, and agricultural programmes—financing and drilling boreholes—for them to engage in meaningful activities as citizens.

5. Economic Rehabilitation

German colonial troops displaced Ovaherero people from their land. Much of the vast territory available for the resettlement of the diaspora must be rehabilitated to make it livable and economically viable, enabling those resettled to engage in meaningful and productive economic activities. Thus, the OPMRF demands that any resettlement programme be accompanied by financial, legal, and economic assistance, which may include, among other measures, drilling boreholes, fencing designed areas, and making the land more accessible for transportation. The German government must commit to a reparatory justice framework that includes a comprehensive rehabilitation process jointly developed with the affected communities.

6. Inclusive Multilateral Negotiations

The German and Namibian governments have engaged in bilateral negotiations from which the descendants of the genocide's victims in Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, and elsewhere have been excluded. Following General von Trotha's explicit order to expel the Ovaherero people from so-called German territory, surviving Ovaherero fled

to Botswana, South Africa, and Angola. They were not allowed to return until after Namibia gained independence. The descendants of the victims and survivors continue to live in these countries, but without clear international legal status. In Botswana, for example, many are considered nationals but do not enjoy full citizenship rights.

Thus, the OPMRF demands that the German government, in the spirit of reconciliation, engage in multilateral negotiations involving the descendants of the victims and survivors of the genocide, regardless of their geographical location. Such negotiations should include the African Union, the United Nations, and relevant regional human rights bodies as observers to the process.

7. Framework and Modalities for Reparatory Justice

The German and the Namibian governments engaged in negotiations on the genocide without transparent frameworks. These negotiations lacked the basic structures to include the affected communities and allow them to express their grievances. They also failed to account for the historical scope and understanding of the genocide and led to the joint declaration of 2021 between the two governments, which has been overwhelmingly rejected by the affected communities and the parliament. Thus, the OPMRF demands that the German government commit to jointly developing frameworks and modalities for reparatory justice with the affected communities, the United Nations, the African Union, and other relevant stakeholders. Such a framework would help create fair, mutually agreed upon principles and avenues for meaningful negotiation.

Editorial Note: Instead of a report, we are sharing the principles according to which the Ovaherero People's Memorial and Reconstruction Foundation (OPMRF), with which Nguherimo is affiliated, operate.

RESEARCHING HISTORICAL
BIOGRAPHIES

Anton Wilhelm Amo & Kwasi Boachi

Workshop by
ANDREA - VICKY
AMANKWAA - BIRAGO

The workshop 'Research on Sites of Learning and Remembrance of Colonial History' explored approaches to reassessing the German colonial past through sites of remembrance. It examined questions concerning the formation of cultures of remembrance and the visibility of colonial history in the public sphere. The workshop aimed to reflect on different approaches to reassessing the history of colonialism and on the challenges of presenting it within public institutions.

At the centre of the workshop were two Afro-German figures: Anton Wilhelm Amo, one of the first African philosophers in Europe, and Kwasi Boachi, an aristocratic civil rights activist who has been honoured in Germany as a pioneer of the rights of Black people both in Europe and in a colonial context. Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa-Birago provided insights from her research into their lives and reflected on the importance of an associated culture of remembrance. Both individuals were presented as key historical figures whose contributions have received sufficient recognition. Participants discussed ways to develop public commemoration of these figures and to secure their place within the broader culture of remembrance.

Sankofa and Collective Knowledge

A guiding concept in these discussions was *Sankofa*, a symbol from Akan culture that represents looking back to the past in order to shape the future. For Amankwaa-Birago, Sankofa serves as a metaphor for the process of remembering and learning. She emphasized that remembrance work should not just be based on institutional archives or official initiatives but should, above all, focus on the histories of the communities directly affected. A decolonial approach requires context-sensitive access to knowledge, as it is historically determined and inherently linked to the participants' positionality.

Remembrance and Representation: The Challenge of Homogenization

The representation of colonial history was at the centre of the discussion. Amankwaa-Birago explained that research on sites of remembrance is not merely historical reconstruction but represents a transformative praxis. She emphasized the risk of a homogenized approach to remembrance in a decolonial context, which fails to do justice to the complex experiences of the affected communities. An important term

in this regard was ‘biographèmes’—an approach to biography that recognizes the fragmentation of life stories and the reconstruction of historical events.

New Sites of Learning and Remembrance: Practical Examples

The practice of renaming streets and squares was cited as an example of new sites of learning and remembrance in Germany. The renaming of a street and a square in Berlin after Anton Wilhelm Amo was highlighted as a successful instance of realizing an active culture of remembrance. Amankwaa-Birago also discussed projects such as the Library of Africa and The African Diaspora (LOATAD) in Ghana which serves as a platform for transnational cultures of remembrance and promotes resistance to the homogenization of history. These initiatives were presented as examples of the successful integration of decolonial perspectives into public remembrance culture.

The Politics and Economics of Remembrance

The discussion also emphasized the connection between the politics of remembrance and the economic conditions that shape remembrance culture. The role of Afro-diasporic archives and collective initiatives, which generate new spaces for remembrance and challenge the homogenization of historiography, was highlighted. Such initiatives are not just academic projects but also forms of activism that encourage society to question and change existing narratives.

Research Processes and Practices: Research as Resistance

Amankwaa-Birago explained her approach to research, which involves not only collecting archival material but also cooperating with others in order to gain a new perspective on the past. While researching Amo and Boachi, she encountered numerous fragments and historical gaps, which prevented her from developing a clear, unified narrative. This complexity was ultimately seen as a strength—an opportunity to develop a more differentiated culture of remembrance.

Report by Raphael Steinwandel

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

EXPLORING A
(DE)CENTRALIZED
SPATIAL CONCEPT

Workshop by
ANNA YEBOAH

At the beginning of the *Memory in Motion* workshop, there was a short introductory round where everyone had the opportunity to introduce themselves and share perspective and expertise they wanted to contribute to the discussion based on the guiding question: What are the expectations for a site of learning and remembrance for German colonialism?

Here, expertise did not refer to a purely specialist perspective. There is a great deal of existing knowledge—embodied, activist, practical, theoretical etc.—within all of us, which we can draw on and which is worth sharing in order to begin a dialogue.

At times, the *Memory in Motion* curators had very concrete ideas of how such a site of learning and remembrance might be spatially conceived, addressing questions such as: What atmosphere should the site have? What materials will be used in the construction of the building? Who will serve as the architect?

However, the orientation of the workshop is to take a step back and approach the site—or rather, sites (plural!?)—in terms of their functions/uses/practices, particularly regarding the civil-society actors who should have a place within them according to the trusted rule: form follows function.

Discussion

What kind of character should this site have?

On the one hand, there was agreement that it should be a transformative place that remains fluid and open—‘precarious’—as well as participative and adaptable, and that mobile formats can find a place within it. It was also clear that not just ONE site can or should fulfill this role. At the same time, a certain degree of centrality and monumentality also appears important.

Quote: ‘The site must be so large that it is too expensive to simply take down again.’

Critique: In recent years, cultural policy has made use of precisely this ‘fluid language’, also in order to dissolve and hollow out such sites—in short, to avoid maintaining them. Despite the validity of this programmatically ‘fluid’ approach, it is essential to not lose sight of this. A fixed location is therefore extremely important. This is about the recognition of one’s own responsibility. Thesis: There can be no adequate reparations as long as there is (still) no genuine recognition!

Working Groups on Clusters of Functions: Where can such sites/examples already be found (in Germany/elsewhere)?

1. Working Group Cluster:

Learning and Documentation/Archive

A collection of examples of existing sites focused on archives and knowledge:

African Futures Institute (Accra), Anti-Apartheid Museum (Johannesburg), museums in Georgia and Smithsonian NMHAAC (Washington, DC), the Black Archives (Amsterdam), private archives, Black Institutes, civil-society libraries such as EOTO and Fasiathek, the Talking Objects Archive, and archives divided across different federal institutions where anti-colonial resistance is also documented but might not be read as such, for example, the Paul Robeson Archive at the Academy of Arts in Berlin.

2. Working Group Cluster:

Networking, Encounter, Exchange

There is a need for small and large rooms—spaces in which initiatives can meet as well as larger rooms for different kinds of events—that are as open as possible in terms of spatial structure and do not prescribe specific forms of gathering or hierarchy, for example through directed lighting or sound equipment. Spaces are needed that facilitate a redefinition of coming together.

Examples: In Berlin, Savvy Contemporary, Each One Teach One, HKW; in Hamburg, Fasiathek and Afrotopia; and Rote Fabrik Zurich.

3. Working Group Cluster:

Practices—Reflecting and Feeling

It is not possible to create politically correct sites without working with the old symbols.

However, there is an opportunity to deconstruct these symbols participatively, for example in collaboration with school classes or artists from former German colonies. Working in pairs and as a team (across continents) plays an important role here, and the German majority society should not be absolved of its responsibility. The project should focus on creating other prisms of perception rather than reproducing traditional forms of remembrance. This includes incorporating other formats such as

art, literature, and dialogue, and coming together by researching different forms of trauma. Another approach discussed was facilitating remembrance through an archive of eyewitness interviews in order to create new (counter)narratives.

Report by Melissa Makele

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

AFRICAN ACCELERATIONISM
AND DECOLONIAL VISIONS
FOR SITES OF REMEMBRANCE

Workshop by
MARK MUSHIVA

African Accelerationism (AA) is a conceptual framework for understanding the socio-political dynamics of what Mushiva has previously referred to as the 'gravities of anti-Blackness': different spectres of violence enveloping the world, which include racism, colonialism, and institutional racism (like the layers Troposphere, Stratosphere, and Mesosphere) that combine to create anti-Black gravity/gravities. AA is suggested as a vehicle (e.g., a rocket) that, when reaching enough energy, is able to defy the gravities of anti-Blackness. The Independence Movement on the African continent in the 1960s or the overall anti-colonial transnational solidarity network (e.g., in the context of the Bandung Conference) can be understood as glimpses of African Accelerationism. Both represent historical examples in which significant amounts of energy were collected with the aim of escaping the gravities of anti-Blackness. According to the AA framework, European powers feared this energy and sabotaged its movements through coups against Patrice Lumumba, Thomas Sankara, and Kwame Nkrumah, three leading figures of the African Independence Movements. Therefore, a thorough escape did not happen.

AA competes with two other 'interstellar vehicles': Pan-Africanism and Afro-futurism. The latter, Afro-futurism, was flattened through its monolithic representation of UK and US-contexts. Cheikh Anta Diop (Senegal) had an Afro-centrist approach, calling for the unification of Africans under a federal system of all African countries. Diop also developed the first African Energy Doctrine in the 60s, suggesting how to self-sufficiently provide the continent with energy through a formula of energy pluralism in which the multiple sources of energy existing on the African continent are combined complementarily.

What Can African Accelerationism Do for Colonial Memory?

An interesting example is a monument built after independence that celebrates the ambitious goals of the independence movements: the Agostinho Neto Mausoleum in Luanda, Angola (also known as the "Angolan Sputnik"). It was completed in 2012 by the North Korean construction company Mansudae Overseas Projects.. The building style is cosmic and brutalist, thus referencing the Soviet Union, the biggest ally of the Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) during the civil war. Through the lens of AA, it becomes clear how the monument represents the 'lingering and haunting' energy that is not only based on lamenting colonial crimes but that also harnesses African ambitions of independence.

Other examples include:

- Turbo Summation, one of Mushiva's current projects: Excerpt of a music video in which a 3D-model of the Agostinho Neto Mausoleum is transplanted into the Namibian landscape.
- EarthNest: Decolonial Memorial located in Berlin (The Lockward Collective, 2024).
- The Kinfolk: US-startup creating 3D monuments through augmented reality (e.g., Karpfenteich/Treptower Park)

In many places memorials are often still absent in public space. Some case studies in which monuments of colonial memory are still lacking include:

1. The Shinkolobwe mine, Congo (DRC):

The exploitation of uranium has been enabled by the colonial exploitation of the DRC. Patrice Lumumba's death, for instance, was also plotted to further exploit uranium in the post-colonial era. The uranium from the Shinkolobwe mine was used to construct the bombs thrown over Nagasaki and Hiroshima. While the mines still exist, there is no memorial marking the site. Most people, including environmentalists, thus do not know of the violent history connecting these sites.

2. Swakopmund, Namibia:

German Namibians biked over the unmarked graves in Swakopmund shortly after Ovaherero communities called for the construction of marked graves in 2006. In addition, upperclass (white) residential areas continue to be built on the unmarked graves. These residents thus constantly try to destroy the graves in order to continue their exploitation of the land and evade accountability. The Ovaherero community has since erected a monument in the area that is frequently vandalized. The monument was eventually vandalized as well, which may have been done by the white residents. In connection to this, recent incidents of vandalism of a memorial of colonial remembrance include a square in Chemnitz, Germany, devoted to the Hornkranz Massacre (Namibia).

3. Treptower Park, Berlin, Germany:

To this day, there is no official commemoration in Treptower Park of the ethnological exhibition that took place as part of the 1896 colonial exhibition, in which people primarily from Namibia were displayed around the *Karpfenteich*.

Contributions/Questions from Workshop Participants:

1. Must monuments be located in Germany? Can we imagine the location of such monuments differently and consider their respective colonial contexts? Germany is the life centre and home of many Black people, monuments are required both in the countries of the former colonial powers as well as in the formerly colonized countries.
2. When thinking about memorial sites, the focus should be the youth, they need the information transported through memorial sites. There are many children of African descent living in Germany, therefore creating memorial sites on the African continent only will be detrimental for the future generations living in Germany.
3. In addition to Blackness as identity, could one also consider Blackness as method? How can there be a connection to other oppressed groups in order not to reproduce monolithic group affiliations? How can we complicate notions of identity and group affiliation?

Summarization

A lot of future generations of African descent will be born in the West. Commemoration should also harness the energy of populations in the global diaspora who have raised awareness about continental struggles. Monuments and statues are not a pre-colonial African phenomena. There is a need to problematize the corruptions of patriarchy and anti-colonial commemoration. To accelerate commemoration is also about reminding world populations of colonial continuities, commemoration is not just about Congo, Namibia, and the Ivory Coast in the 60s, perhaps commemoration should do justice to the fact of colonial continuity.

Report by Luca Tamara Yaa Amponsah

PLACES OF MEMORY
IN BERLIN

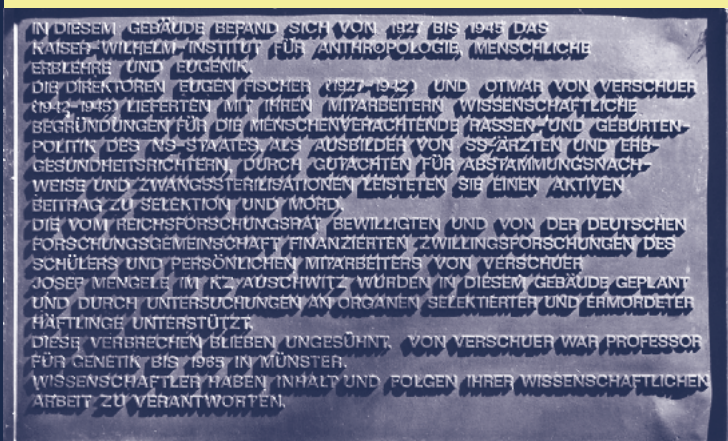
The Ihnestraße Memorial

Manuela Bauche

On 15 October 2024, the Ihnestraße Memorial opened at the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science at Freie Universität Berlin. The decentralized exhibition critically illuminates the history of the former Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Genetics (KWI-A). The-matizing the connection between science and injustice at the historical site, it also commemorates the institute's victims.

The building at Ihnestraße 22 in the Dahlem district of Berlin, which today houses part of the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science, was the seat of the KWI-A from 1927–45. Shortly after its founding, the KWI-A became a prominent institute for human genetics and 'race research', already propagating eugenicist ideas during the Weimar Republic. Individual scientists also drew on earlier colonial anthropological research. During National Socialism, researchers supported the Nazi policies of persecuting and exterminating Jews, people with disabilities, and members of other ethnic groups, and participated in these crimes.

The Ihnestraße Memorial was developed by the project 'History of Ihnestraße 22', established in January 2019. The project team consolidated extensive research on the history of the KWI-A and eugenics in Germany and conducted further research to fill gaps in existing knowledge. In consultation with organizations representing relevant victim groups and a scientific advisory board, they developed formats and content for a sensitive visualization of and engagement with the history of the KWI-A and the associated injustices. Since 2024, the Ihnestraße Memorial has been affiliated with the Working Group on University History.



Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered Under National Socialism

Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe

In 1992, the German federal government resolved to erect a national memorial commemorating the murder and persecution of European Sinti and Roma under National Socialism. The memorial, designed by the artist Dani Karavan, consists of a fountain with a stone that can be lowered, upon which a fresh flower is placed every day. Informational boards provide details on the exclusion and mass murder of this minority during the Nazi reign of terror. The memorial was presented to the public during a ceremony on 24 October 2012. The artist wrote the following words on the memorial:

A clearing in the Tiergarten, bordered by trees and bushes, close to the Reichstag building. A small, inconspicuous square, secluded from the noise of the metropolis. A place of condolence, a place to feel pain, to remember, and never allow the annihilation of the Sinti and Roma by the Nazi regime to be forgotten. Is such a place even possible? Is the possible perhaps emptiness, nothing? Do I have the strength within me to create a place of nothingness? Where there is nothing. No words, no names, no metal, no stone. Just tears, just water, encircled by the survivors, by those who remember the event, by those who know the horror, and others who do not. They are all reflected here, upside down, in the water of the deep, black pit, while the sky covers them—the water, the tears. Just one single little stone, that sinks and rises, again and again, day after day. And every day a new little flower placed upon it, to remember anew each time, to awaken the memory, steadfastly, for all eternity. The water surrounds the sky, the blue, the grey, the black



sky. The clouds, the light, the darkness. Everything is swallowed up by the swirling water. All that remains of the murdered melody is the sound of a solitary violin, floating in pain.



PLACES OF MEMORY IN BERLIN

Wilhelmstraße 92

Dekoloniale Memory Culture in the City

The project space of Dekoloniale Memory Culture in the City was located at Wilhelmstraße 92 in Berlin, between the former sites of the Reich Chancellery and the Foreign Office, where the emissaries of the European powers, the United States, and the Ottoman Empire met for the Berlin Conference of 1884/85 at the invitation of the German Reich and the French Republic. Under the chairmanship of Reich Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, they agreed on the rules for the colonial partition and exploitation of the African continent. In 2020, the project Dekoloniale Memory Culture in the City had the opportunity to rent a working, seminar, and event space directly at the

site of the Berlin Conference. The reclamation of this historic site was of great importance to the project and marked the starting point for a new, collaborative, and decentralized engagement with German colonialism. The rooms at Wilhelmstraße 92 were used together with the association Decolonize Berlin e.V. Over the course of the project, this space at the site of the former Reich Chancellery established itself as a centre for critical engagement with the colonial past. Through display-window exhibitions such as *Remember. Apologize. Compensate* (2024) and numerous public events, the histories of this symbolically charged site were made visible, supporting demands for recognition of resistance to German and European colonial crimes.

Unfortunately, the Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion and the Stadtmuseum Berlin Foundation were unable to secure the symbolically significant space beyond the duration of the project. The project premises had to be vacated at the turn of 2024/25, following the owner's failure to agree on an extension to the contract. Thus, the socio-political use of the site, which stands, like no other, for Europe's unjust colonial rule in Africa, ended with the model project Dekoloniale Memory Culture in the City. Its loss leaves a gaping hole in Berlin's post-colonial remembrance culture.

Wedding–African Quarter

Noël Schepp

Through the renaming of street signs, the neighbourhood in the Wedding district of Berlin is undergoing a process of transformation, from a colonial memorial area to a site of learning and remembrance for colonial resistance and the independence of African nations. The history of the origin of the African Quarter shows that colonialism occupied a prominent position within the public sphere in Germany before it was suppressed in the post-Second World War period. During the forty years of its formation, from 1899 to 1939, the quarter reflected the development and prominence of the German colonial spirit, which formed a constant element in the politically unsettled times.

The initial steps in the creation of the quarter, which was subsequently copied by other cities in Germany (such as Munich, Cologne, and Düsseldorf), took place in 1899. In the largely unbuilt northern perimeter above Seestraße, two streets were named after German colonies of the time, Togo and Cameroon in West Africa. Historians are divided on the precise

initiator of this undertaking. While Ulrich van der Heyden¹ states that it was carried out at the personal request of Kaiser Wilhelm II, other authors, in contrast, point out that the initiative for the naming of the quarter originated from the head of the department for street naming at the time, city councillor Ernst Friedel, who was a supporter of the German colonies². Some people assume that the ‘Animal and People Exhibitor’ Carl Hagenbeck, with his plans to populate the adjoining park—today’s Volkspark Rehberge—with a zoo and so-called ethnographic expositions, was responsible for giving shape to the African Quarter³. However, Hagenbeck presented these plans considerably later, in 1912, and due to the start of the First World War, these plans were never realized.

One after the other, the naming of the streets took place, analogous to the acquisition of the German colonies. However, even after the period of actual colonial rule, the Weimar Republic’s popular colonial-revisionist current led to a renewed intensification of the naming practice. Following the loss of the colonies after the First World War, the theme occupied an even more prominent position within public discourse.

- 1 Ulrich Van der Heyden, “Das Afrikanische Viertel”. In *Kolonialmetropole Berlin*, ed. Ulrich van der Heyden and Joachim Zeller. 261–263. Berlin Edition: Berlin 2002, P. 261.
- 2 Christian Kopp and Marius Krohn, “Blues in Schwarz-Weiß: Berlins Black Community im Widerstand gegen kolonialrassistische Straßennamen”. In *Black Berlin: die deutsche Metropole und ihre afrikanische Diaspora in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed. Oumar Diallo and Joachim Zeller, 219–231. Berlin: Metropol 2013, P. 223.
- 3 Alexander Honold, “Afrikanisches Viertel – Straßennamen als kolonialer Gedächtnisraum”. In *Phantasiereiche. Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus*, 305–321, ed. Birthe Kundrus, Frankfurt am Main: Campus 2003. P. 314.



The only nuance in the colonial logic of the quarter's street names is provided by Ghanastraße, which forms the outer perimeter of the northern section. It was named in 1958 during a visit of the Ghanaian head of state, which had recently become independent. Initiatives for the renaming of especially problematic street names that were named after men who were directly involved in colonial injustices were already launched in the post-Second World War period, and increasingly from the 1980s onwards. Since the turn of the millennium, protests from people of African origin and in the Black community who see the colonial street names as a continual racist provocation have drawn increasing attention. In 2018, after various attempts to find suitable alternatives to the contaminated street names, agreement was reached at the political level to rename the streets after prominent anti-colonial resistance figures.

In 1910, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death, the central square in the northern section of the quarter was named in honour of Gustav Nachtigal (1834–1885). He is considered the 'founder' of the colonies of Togo and Cameroon. The square is now named in memory of Emily Engome Dayas (1881–1936) and Rudolf Duala Manga Bell (1873–1914), who, as rulers of Duala in present-day Cameroon, confronted the German colonial authorities. Having been educated in Germany, they possessed knowledge of the language and legal system. This confrontation ultimately led to their execution for 'treason'. The celebratory unveiling of the new street signs in December 2022 was attended by the Cameroonian ambassador as well as the reigning King of Duala, Jean-Yves Eboumbou Douala Bell. Around 1902, the street in the southern half of the quarter running parallel to Müllerstraße was called Lüderitzstraße. Named after Adolf Lüderitz (1834–1886), the son of a tobacco merchant from Bremen, this street, together with Swakopmunder Straße and the Windhukstraße, pays reference to the largest German colony in terms of area: 'German Southwest Africa'⁴. In 2018, the district council of Mitte resolved to change Lüderitzstraße to Cornelius-Fredericks-Straße to recognize the captain of the Nama, who at times led the resistance against the German colonial power in what is today Namibia. In 1904, the Ovaherero ethnic group who are also Indigenous to present-day Namibia, under Samuel Maharero, revolted against the German 'Protection Forces'. This uprising was brutally quashed and ended in the extermination of the majority of the Ovaherero people. In the subsequent guerrilla warfare, which continued for years, Cornelius Fredericks was considered the most dangerous of the colonial regime's adversaries. He died in 1907, one year after the Nama uprising, because of

4 Horst Gründer; *Geschichte der deutschen Kolonien*. Paderborn/München: Schöningh 1985. P. 163.

the inhumane conditions during his imprisonment in the concentration camp on Lüderitz Bay.

During the unveiling of the street sign in 2022, the Namibian ambassador called for a genuine recognition of the genocide committed against the Nama and Ovaherero people. Considered the first genocide of the twentieth century, it is estimated to have cost the lives of 100,000 people, and ultimately led to the defeat of the resistance against the German colonial power.

According to the 2018 resolution of the Mitte district council, Petersallee was renamed Maji-Maji-Allee and Anna-Mungunda-Allee. Maji-Maji-Allee was to provide a reminder of the mass uprising against German colonial rule in East Africa. In 1905, the people, especially those in the south of the colony, revolted against the Imperial Protection Force for German Africa. This occurred in reaction to the horrendous raising of the poll tax.

The Kiswahili word ‘maji’ means water, which, mixed with maize and millet, was served to the fighters as a medicine. This was thought not only to strengthen the unity of the rebels, but also to make them invulnerable to the bullets of the colonists.

As a result of the uprising, in which the German forces maintained the upper hand—although not without the assistance of African mercenaries, so-called Askari—more than 75,000 people were killed. According to historians, the result of the conflict was as devastating as the uprising of the Nama and Ovaherero in ‘German Southwest Africa’.

The second section of Petersallee was named after Anna ‘Kakurukaze’ Mungunda (1932–1959). She was a member of the Ovaherero, a prominent fighter for the independence of Namibia, and was commemorated with a national grave of honour in Windhoek. She was the first woman to participate in the protests against South African foreign rule. As a result, she was shot by the police and is now considered a national hero in Namibia. The renaming of the streets is the result of the commitment of numerous groups and individuals, such as the association Decolonize Berlin and the Initiative of Black People in Germany. The commemoration of anti-colonial resistance fighters is a further step in the process of decolonization—not just in the urban space of Berlin, but also in Germany’s culture of remembrance.

Translated from German by Colin Shepherd

W E M I N M O T I

ORV

in Berlin in December 2024

ON II



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34



35

33 Miriam Siré Camara

34 From Left to Right:

Miriam Siré Camara, Ibou Coulibaly Diop,
Beatrice Angut Oola, Emmanuel Kwasi
Asare, Iris Rajanayagam, Jonas Prinzleve,
and Mèhèza Kalibani

35 Front Row: Madeline Danquah, Brenda
Davina, Sonia Octavio, and other work-
shop participants at Haus der Kulturen
der Welt





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- 36 Workshop participants during the workshop 'Mapping Shark Island' with Mark Mushiva & Ashkan Cheheltan
- 37 Eliza-Maïmouna Sarr
- 38 Left to Right: Daniela Vizgarra, Tanja Ostojić





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- 39 Left to Right: Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, Rama Thiaw, and Joseph Gaï Ramaka during a guided tour of the African Quarter in Wedding, Berlin
- 40 Mnyaka Sururu Mboro leads a guided tour through the African Quarter in Wedding, Berlin
- 41 Street signs showing the newly named Maji-Maji-Allee and Manga-Bell-Platz



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- 42 Fogha Mc Cornilius Refem
- 43 Julien Enzanza
- 44 Rehema Busch
- 45 Participants during a guided tour of the African Quarter in Wedding, Berlin, led by Mnyaka Sururu Mboro



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46 Left to Right:
Louis Henri Seukwa, Sonia Lawson

47+48

Keynote conversation: 'Memory work in non-formal places of learning from artistic and pedagogical perspectives' with Sonia Lawson, Ibrahim Mahama, Louis Henry Seukwa, Anja Saleh, moderated by Suy Lan Hopmann

49 Simon Goeke



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- 50 From Left to Right:
Anja Saleh and
Ibrahim Mahama
- 51 Anujah Fernando
- 52 Participant
at *Memory in Motion*
- 53 Participant
at *Memory in Motion*



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- 54 From Left to Right:
Andrea-Vicky Amankwaa Birago
and Julien Enzanza
- 55 From Left to Right:
Sewodo Koudzo Komlanvi,
Jonas Prinzleve
- 56 Rama Thiaw
- 57 Rehema Busch

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- 58 From Left to Right: Eric Otieno Sumba,
Renée Eloundou, Beatrace Angut Oola
59 Ashkan Cheheltan
60 Akuma Saningong



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MEMORY IN MOTION II



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- 61 From Left to Right:
Iris Rajanayagam,
Ibou Coulibaly Diop,
Miriam Siré Camara,
Beatrice Angut Oola,
Emmanuel Kwasi Asare,
Eric Otieno Sumba,
Jonas Prinzleve, and
Mèhèza Kalibani
- 62 Maisha-Maureen Auma
- 63 Rehema Busch



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- 64 From Left to Right: Peggy Piesche and Katja Kinder
- 65 From Left to Right: Reneé Eloundou and Miriam Siré Camara
- 66 From Left to Right: Maisha-Maureen Auma and Jie-Hyun Lim
- 67 Beatrace Angut Oola



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MEMORY IN MOTION II



- 68 From Left to Right:
Sandra Condori Mamani,
Daniela Vizgarra,
Eliza-Maïmouna Sarr
- 69 Nataly Jung-Hwa Han
- 70 From Left to Right:
Hildegard Titus and
Rehema Busch
- 71 From Left to Right:
Emmanuel Kwasi Asare
and Louis Henri Seukwa



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- 72 From Left to Right:
Brenda Davina, Mable Sarkodie,
Ndey Bassine Jammeh-Siegel,
Mimi Harder
- 73 From Left to Right:
Memory Biwa, Brenda Boateng
(DJ Nomi), Ibou Coulibaly Diop
- 74 From Left to Right:
Nhu Y Linda Nguyen,
Nataly Jung-Hwa Han
- 75 From Left to Right: Ibou Coulibaly Diop,
Millicent Adjei



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14.12
Berlin

Memory in Motion

Transnationales Netzwerk für
einen Ort des Lernens und
der Erinnerung an den
Kolonialismus in Deutschland

Transnational Network for
a Place of Learning and
Memory of Colonialism in
Germany



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- 76 From Left to Right:
Noa K. Ha, Nathalie Vairac, Hildegard Titus
- 77 From Left to Right:
Nathalie Vairac, Hildegard Titus
- 78 From Left to Right:
Noa K. Ha, Nathalie Vairac,
Hildegard Titus, Sima Luipert



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- 79 From Left to Right:
Elisabeth Kaneza,
Eliza-Maïmouna Sarr
- 80 Participants during a
panel at the Safi Faye Hall,
HKW
- 81 Nathalie Vairac's
performance, Safi Faye
Hall, HKW

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN HAMBURG AND BERLIN

Millicent Adjei
ARCA-Afrikanisches Bildungszen-
trum / AK Hamburg Postkolonial

Sénomé Kofi Agbodjinou
Woelab TG

Josua Kwesi Aikins
Medienpolitik e.V.

Cornelius Antwi
Photographer/Film-maker

Lorena Diez Arias
Independent Curator

Nana Asafu-Adjei
Historic Museums Foundation
Hamburg (SHMH)

Emmanuel Asare
Advisory Board for the Decoloniza-
tion of Hamburg

Nigel Asher
Black History Month Hamburg

Kevin Asher
Black History Month Hamburg

Tanja Aminata Bah
Historic Museums Foundation
Hamburg (SHMH)

Manuela Bauche
Ihnestraße Memorial

Memory Biwa
Independent Artist

Rehema Busch
Independent Curator

Felisha Carénage
Independent Artist

Tammy Chou
Studio Marshmallow

Meryem Choukri
Cultural Studies Scholar / Activist

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**Memory in Motion – Sites of Learning
and Remembrance of Colonialism in Germany**

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