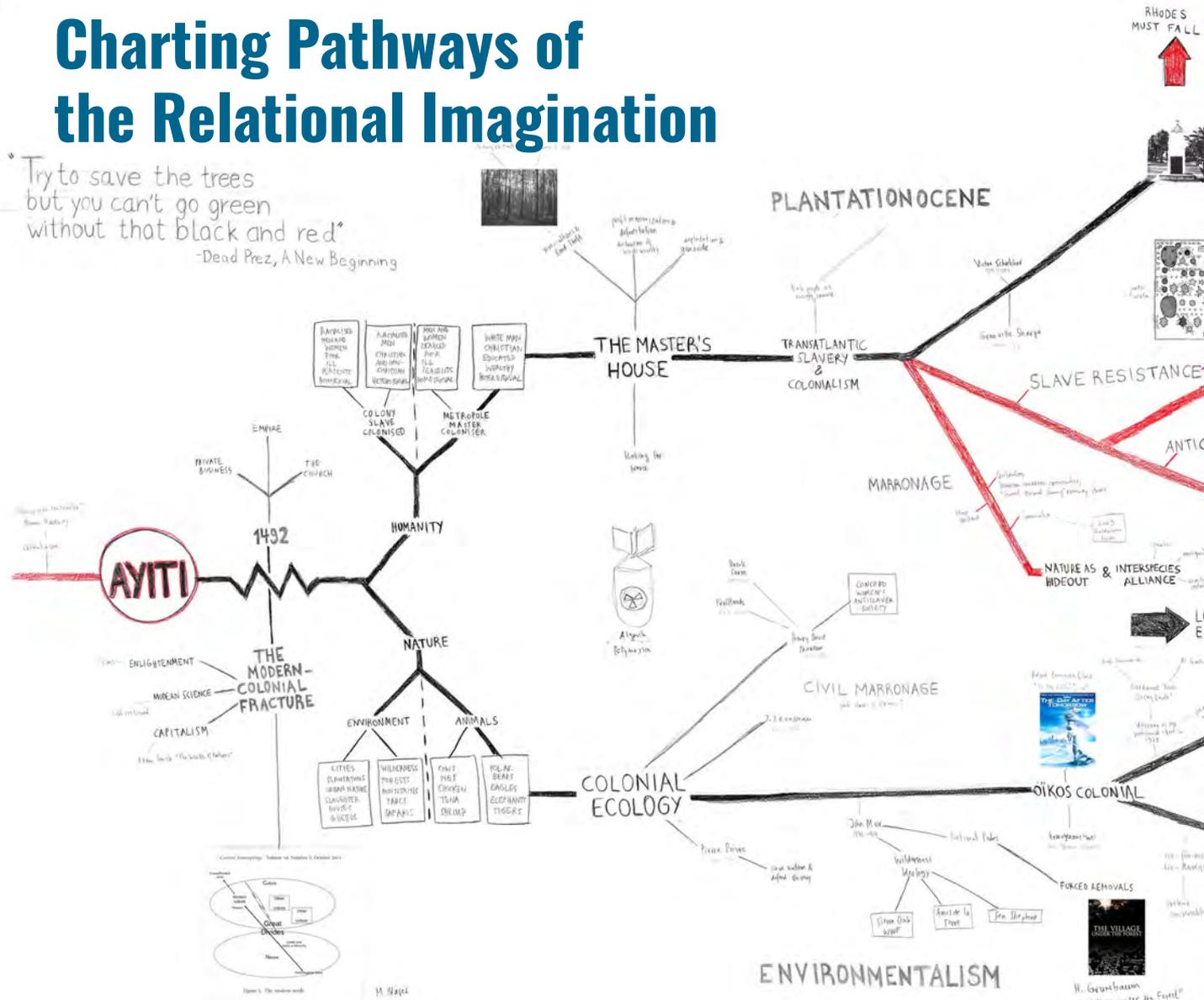# Mapping Decolonial Bo

Charting Pathways of the Relational Imagination
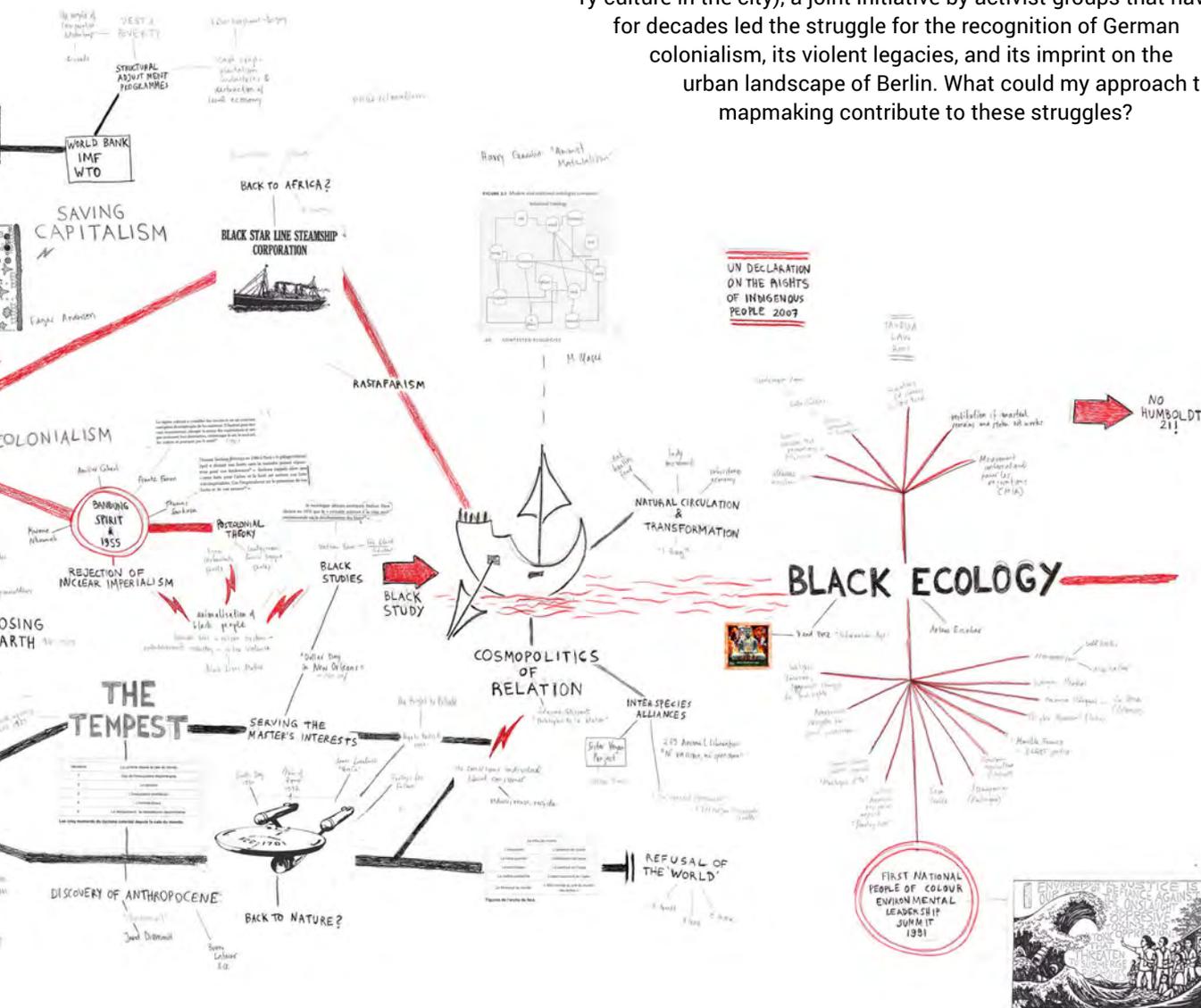
"Try to save the trees
but you can't go green
without that black and red"
—Dead Prez, A New Beginning

PLANTATIONOCENE

RHODES MUST FALL

THE MASTER'S HOUSE

TRANSATLANTIC SLAVERY & COLONIALISM

SLAVE RESISTANCE

ANTIC

MARRONAGE

BACKLISH/HEALED WOMEN POOR ILL ILLITERATE BIRACIAL | RACIALISED MEN CRIPPLED AND NON-CHRISTIAN VICTIM BEING | MEN AND WOMEN DISABLED POOR ILL ILLITERATE NON-HUMAN | WHITE MAN CHRISTIAN EDUCATED WEALTHY BIOLOGICAL

COLONY SLAVE COLONISED | METROPOLE MASTER COLONISER

EMPIRE

PRIVATE BUSINESS | THE CHURCH

1492

HUMANITY

AYITI

ENLIGHTENMENT
MODERN SCIENCE

THE MODERN-COLONIAL FRACTURE

CAPITALISM

NATURE

NATURE AS HIDEOUT & INTERSPECIES ALLIANCE

CONCORD WOMEN'S ANTISLAVERY SOCIETY

CIVIL MARRONAGE

ENVIRONMENT | ANIMALS

CITIES PLANTATIONS URBAN NATURE SLAUGHTER HOUSES & GHETTOS | WILDERNESS FORESTS MOUNTAINS PARKS SAFARIS | COWS PIGS CHICKEN TUNA SHRIMP | POLAR BEARS EAGLES ELEPHANTS TIGERS

COLONIAL ECOLOGY

OÏKOS COLONIAL

FORCED REMOVALS

ENVIRONMENTALISM

THE VILLAGE UNDER THE FOREST

M. Klazel

erlin

Moses
März

My interest in mapmaking emerged out of collective editorial work at the *Chimurenga Chronic* – a Pan-African literary magazine based in Cape Town, South Africa. I joined the *Chronic's* editorial team in 2014 as preparations for an issue called "New Cartographies" were ongoing. The issue interrogated the role of cartography as a tool of imperialism and asked what kinds of realities and imaginaries would be rendered visible in maps drawn from an African perspective. In the following years, our cartographic work took on increasingly experimental forms in a series of projects dedicated to exchange and circulation across continental Africa, the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic.[1] In 2021, I decided to apply this artistic research method to the city of Berlin, sparked by a call for applications by *Dekoloniale – Erinnerungskultur in der Stadt* (The decolonial – memory culture in the city), a joint initiative by activist groups that have for decades led the struggle for the recognition of German colonialism, its violent legacies, and its imprint on the urban landscape of Berlin. What could my approach to mapmaking contribute to these struggles?

ANTICOLONIALISM

[...]ves

Amilcar Cabral

Frantz Fanon

Thomas Sankara

BANDUNG SPIRIT ✳ 1955

Kwame Nkrumah

POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

Le régime colonial a [...] sous peine de catastrophe de les maintenir. Il faudrait peut-être tout recommencer, changer la nature des exportations et non pas seulement leur destination, réinterroger le sol, le sous-sol, les rivières et pourquoi pas le soleil[59].   (1961)

Thomas Sankara dénonça en 1986 à P[...] [qui] a décimé nos forêts sans la m[...] trice pour nos lendemains[61] ». San[...] « cette lutte pour l'arbre et la forê[...] anti-impérialiste. Car l'impérialisme [...] forêts et de nos savanes[62] ».

Dipesh Chakrabarty (2012)

Sanjay Bachir [...] (201[...])

2009 Goldmann Prize

smaker

mosquitos

& INTERSPECIES ALLIANCE

insects destroy monocultures

REJECTION OF NUCLEAR IMPERIALISM

animalisation of black people

human zoos - prison system [...] entertainment industry - police violen[...]

Black Lives Matter
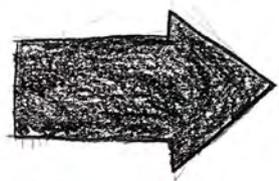
LOSING EARTH 1978-1989

Kate Pomerance

Al Gore

Nathaniel Rich "Losing Earth"

political opening until 1989

discovery of the greenhouse effect in 1978

Al G[...]

THE TEMPEST

SE[...] MA[...]

Earth Day ~1970

Moments	Le cyclone depuis la cale du monde
1	Cap de l'insouciance discriminante
2	Le calvaire
3	L'insouciance maintenue
4	L'infernal chaos
5	Le dénouement : la redistribution discriminante

**Les cinq moments du cyclone colonial depuis la cale du monde.**

[...]ONIAL

NCC-1[...]

aris « le pillage colonial
oindre pensée répara-
kara rappela alors que
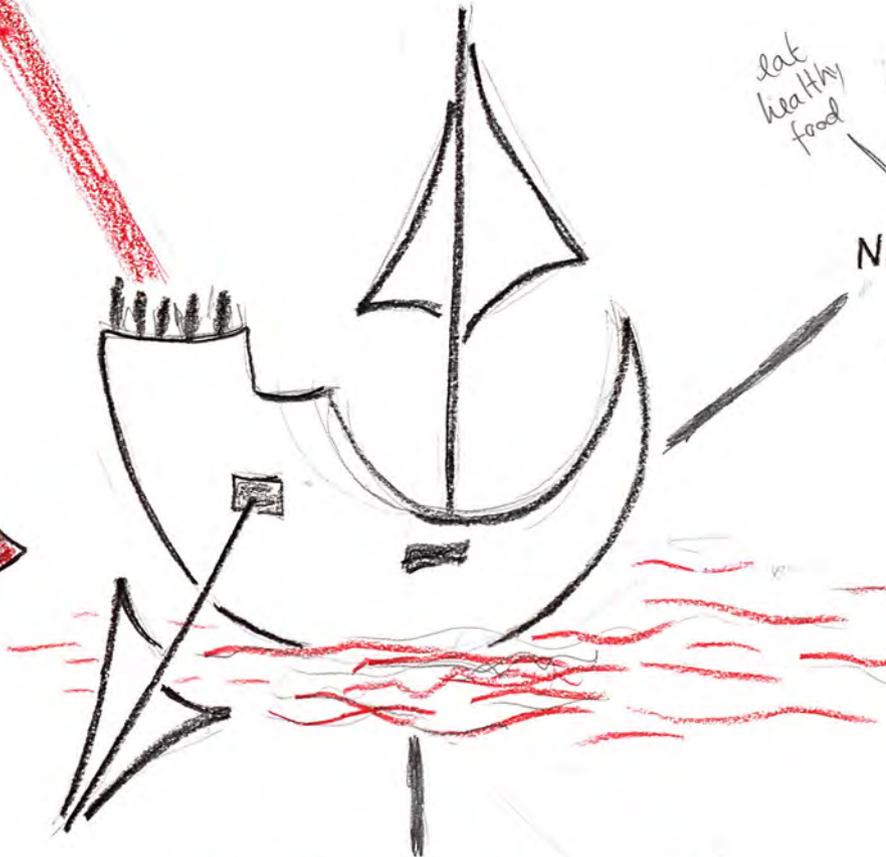t est surtout une lutte
est le pyromane de nos

le sociologue africain-américain Nathan Hare
déclare en 1970 que la « véritable solution à la crise envi-
ronnementale est la décolonisation des Noirs[60] ».

Nathan Hare — The Black Scholar

BLACK STUDIES
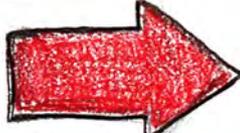
BLACK STUDY

"Dollar Day in New Orleans"
— Mos Def

RVING THE
STER'S INTERESTS

Club of Rome 1972

James Lovelock "Gaia"

The Right to Pollute

Kyoto Protocol 1997

Fridays for Future

 eat healthy food

N

COSMOPOLITICS OF RELATION

Édouard Glissant "Philosophie de la Relation"

INTE AL

Sister Vegan Project

Breeze Harper

the conscious individual liberal consumer

reduce, reuse, recycle
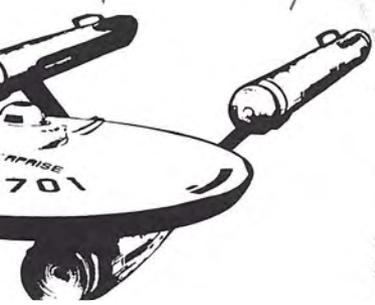
Le refus du monde	
L'insouciant	L'abandon de l'autre
Le xéno-guerrier	L'élimination de l'autre
Le sacrificateur	Le sacrifice de l'autre

701

Decolonial cartography

A critical focus on official colonialism risks confining the view to an isolated historical era, a legalistic understanding of colonial violence, and a nationalist framework – as shown by the 2016-2017 exhibition on German colonialism in the Deutsches Historisches Museum. A decolonial perspective identifies coloniality, understood as the underlying logic of all Western modern/colonial imperialisms, as the root problem from which specific global and local crisis emerge as symptoms. Racism, capitalism, sexism, and environmental destruction are those most widely discussed by decolonial scholars. In that sense, it forces us to engage with the ontological and epistemological basis of the various kinds of authoritarian traditions we encounter. As a result, the narrow view of political domination, which conventionally opposes regimes from the authoritarian to the liberal democratic, has to be expanded to consider cultural and economic, as well as local-institutional and global-geopolitical forms of domination. In addition to this crucial work of analysis, the term decolonial evokes a commitment to outline concrete proposals towards more egalitarian, less exclusionary, or non-authoritarian ways of seeing and being in the world.

In my Berlin maps I try to replace a segregational and dehumanising worldview with a relational methodology inspired by non-Western animist ontologies that consider living entities to be constituted by the relations that bind them to other entities in a rhizomatic network. In practical terms, this means combining elements from the arts, sciences, and storytelling and exploring alternatives to dominant conceptions of linear time, flat space, and the autonomous individual subject as advocated by the Enlightenment. With regards to their contribution to anti-authoritarian counterstrategies, these decolonial maps are attentive to the concrete alliances and imaginary common-grounds that put different decolonial struggles in relation with one another. For the Caribbean philosopher and poet Édouard Glis-

sant, the relational imagination is marked by a sensibility and respect for all the differences as they exist in the world. He opposes this stance to the "enemies of the living", who are committed to homogeneity and are driven by fears of the indomitable forces of creolisation.[2] How the conflict between these two forces plays out in and around the specific locality of Berlin is what my decolonial maps seek to chart.

Relating Black Ecology to the restitution of stolen artworks

Looking at the connections between two of these maps, "Black Ecology" and "Restitution", serves to illustrate this approach. "Restitution" is largely based on Bénédicte Savoy's account in "Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst – Geschichte einer postkolonialen Niederlage" (Africa's Fight for its Art – History of a Postcolonial Defeat[3]), which traces the transnational history of initiatives calling for the restitution of stolen art works from a German perspective. It responds to a widely discussed topic in Berlin in the lead-up to the opening of the newly built Humboldt Forum, a museum for "non-European" art in the neo-imperial tradition of the British Museum in London and the Quai Branly in Paris. "Black Ecology" draws on Malcom Ferdinand's book "Une écologie décoloniale – Penser l'écologie depuis le monde caribéen" (Decolonial Ecology – Thinking from the Caribbean World[2]), which sets out from a critique of the division between antiracist struggles and white environmentalism from a Caribbean perspective. At first sight, the two accounts are dedicated to two very distant struggles and geographies. A closer reading of the two texts and a shift in perspective accorded by a decolonial cartographic perspective nevertheless reveals important connections between them.

"Restitution" shows that requests for the return of illicitly acquired art works is not at all a new phenomenon. It began more than 60 years ago. The map traces the conflict between cultural,

political, and institutional actors from the Global South on the right side in red, and an alliance of European museum directors on the left in black. It conjures up an image of a never-ending dispute for human dignity in which the rejected requests by European institutions function like a missile defence system. Despite the continually shifting technical explanations used by the museums and their political partners, in the end the right of the stronger prevails. The Humboldt Forum opened its doors to the public in 2021. While mapping the structure of Savoy's account, I was wondering whether this story is really just about stolen art works and museums? And was it really a case of "postcolonial failure" as the subtitle of the book suggests?

Looking at this struggle from a bit of distance, outside the field of museology and specific policy debates, an array of struggles appears to be related to this issue. In German (post)colonial contexts alone, for example, one has to take into account the struggles for the repatriation of ancestral remains, the call for reparations for the 1904 genocide of the Nama and Herero, and movements for the restitution of the land in Namibia. At the basis of all this issues lies the same power asymmetry and disavowal of African human dignity. Zooming further out, onto a global scale, a similar dynamic could be detected in the structural exploitation of African natural resources for the sake of economies in the Global North, as sanctioned by international financial organisations. As the bottom right corner of the map indicates, a series of maps on these struggles would take on a similar shape. By limiting our attention to any one of them, we might allow the "enemies of the living" to turn a singular issue into a sort of decoy for other forms of neocolonial oppressions to continue unperturbed. This suggests that an effective anti-authoritarian strategy that challenges coloniality at its root might have to develop by bringing these struggles together.

The genealogy of ideas and movements mapped by "Black Ecology" begins more than 500 years ago, in 1492. It approaches contemporary envi-

ronmental issues from the modernist division of the world into humans, non-humans, and the natural realm. For Ferdinand, an awareness of this fundamental rupture is necessary to identify the division between exploitable nature and an exclusionary vision of the human at the foundation of a global economic system, which he calls the Plantationocene. According to Ferdinand, white environmentalism has traditionally focussed on saving the environment or specific animals, while ignoring issues of social justice emerging from genocide of indigenous people, slavery, and colonialism. The map shows the forces resisting these two traditions in red. It traces its history from creole gardens set up by slaves – characterised by their biodiversity in contrast to the plantation's promotion of monocultures – via the rejection of nuclear imperialism at the Afro-Asian Bandung Conference (1955), and more recent articulations of Black Study, towards what Ferdinand calls a "cosmopolitics of relation" that deliberately reconciles the preservation of inter- and non-human relations.

Relocating Berlin in the history of Black transnationalism

From Ferdinand's perspective, the restitution of stolen art is one of the key areas where bridges across the modern human/nature divide can be built. This requires a radical shift away from a modernist worldview, which considers the works of art in question as inanimate private property, towards a respect for animist epistemologies that consider them to be endowed with a "living force" that troubles the subject/object divide. Framed in this longer history, the struggle for restitution should not be narrowly perceived as having been in vain, but forces us to acknowledge the utopian political potentials of this failure. The red arrow in the top right corner of the map indicates that the "Restitution" map can be seen as a moment in this much larger struggle, one that weaves Berlin and the activism around the Humboldt Forum into a more than 500-year-old

global history of Black transnationalism. In contrast to its self-perceived centrality, Berlin occupies a peripheral position in this history of the world, whose hubs have moved from Kingston to Paris, from Accra to Dar es Salaam, or from Delhi to Havana across the centuries.

Setting these two maps in relation with each other challenges a narrow, nationalist, historical perspective, as well as challenging the engrained opposition between liberal democratic and authoritarian regimes. It reveals how institutions in liberal democratic countries, such as Germany, employ authoritarian strategies that exclude, exploit, or oppress "others" – i.e. those who find themselves on the wrong side of the modern/colonial divide – in order to maintain capitalist, racist, and patriarchic structures. Detecting this larger authoritarian structure and the diverse alliance of forces resisting it requires some distance, as well as a transdisciplinary perspective for which maps are useful tools.

Endnotes

1   For an overview of *Chronic publications* see chimurengachronic.co.za

2   Moses März, "Remember Glissant", *Chimurenga Chronic*, 12 April 2021, chimurengachronic.co.za/remember-glissant/

3   Bénédicte Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst: Geschichte einer postkolonialen Niederlage*, München: C.H. Beck, 2021.

4   Malcom Ferdinand, *Une écologie d´écoloniale: Penser l'écologie depuis le monde caribéen*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2019.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT ?!

BLACK ECOLOGY

BLACK TRANSNATIONALISM

EAST BERLIN

DETROIT

FELA KUTI

COUNTE FEIMC

FESTAC '77

UNESCO

AFRO-ASIAN MOVEMENT

THIRD WORLDISM

ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

AFRICA CENTRAL

KUMBU TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

AICA

UN RESOLUTION 3187

ICOM RESOLUTION 1971

ALGERIA 1952

BANDUNG CONFERENCE 1955

HAITI 1804

PERU 1781

PARIS 1956

DAKAR 1966

UN RESOLUTION 1960

BRITISH MUSEUM

RESTITUTION — REPARATION

PILLAGING ARTWORKS

COLONIALISM
SLAVERY
LAND THEFT
GENOCIDE

1492

CAPITALISM
ENLIGHTENMENT
RACISM

MODERN NATION-STATE

"THERE ARE NO MUSEUMS IN AFRICA"

FAKE NEWS CAMPAIGN

STIFTUNG PREUSSISCHER KULTURBESITZ (WEST BERLIN)

THE HISTORY OF THE GERMAN MUSEUM

BRUSSELS – PARIS – BERLIN
THE EUROPEAN ETHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM

LONDON
VIENNA

THE ART OF THE GERMAN MUSEUM

LINDEN MUSEUM

PERGAMON MUSEUM (EAST BERLIN)

ART OF THE CONGO WORLD FAIR

TERVUREN MUSEUM

KUNST AUS ZAIRE

NATIONAL MUSEUM KINSHASA

ÜBERSEE MUSEUM BREMEN

AD-HOC GROUP

LCPRCP

NAIROBI RESOLUTION

THE LIST ISSUE

THE GERMAN DEBATE

THE MYTH OF CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AID

CRISIS MEETING BONN

FAILED DENAZIFICATION

ARTISTIC BLOOD TRANSFUSION