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Introduction

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DOI

[10.4324/9781003100102-1](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003100102-1)

Publication date

2022

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Decolonizing Colonial Heritage

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[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Timm Knudsen, B., Oldfield, J., Buettner, E., & Zabunyan, E. (2022). Introduction. In B. Timm Knudsen, J. Oldfield, E. Buettner, & E. Zabunyan (Eds.), *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage: New Agendas, Actors and Practices in and beyond Europe* (pp. 1-21). (Critical heritages of Europe). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003100102-1>

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Introduction

*Britta Timm Knudsen, John Oldfield, Elizabeth Buettner
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Coloniality, as other scholars have correctly termed it, is a death project.
Decolonization is what I call a theory of life.

—Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni in *Omanga* 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has tested our resolve, as well as our commitment to human rights, especially when it comes to the protection of lives, health and well-being. As European states rushed to impose lockdowns, economic inequalities were quickly exposed, especially in relation to the world's poor for whom lockdown measures (even something as simple as washing one's hands several times a day with soap) were a luxury beyond reach. Workers in lower-paid sectors of the economy or those who depended on casual contracts saw their livelihoods threatened in the face of rising unemployment. A shortage of care services had a disproportionate impact on women, many of them members of immigrant communities, as providers of unpaid care work. Moreover, as statistics clearly showed, the worst effects of the pandemic fell on black and minority ethnic groups, marginalized communities affected by poverty, deprivation and the legacies of colonialism. This was not all. Perversely, rising death rates across Europe and frustration over the delays in developing a vaccine fuelled anti-Asian racism, which resulted in physical and verbal attacks, hate crimes and anti-Chinese rhetoric (Mercer 2020). Even efforts to contain the virus exposed worrying Eurocentric tendencies. Among other memorable episodes, this was brought to light by an incident in the French media, when two doctors' suggestion that Africa should be used as a testing ground for the efficacy of vaccines provoked a furious backlash, notably from leading African and Afro-European football stars. Didier Drogba, Samuel Eto'o and Demba Ba all protested fiercely on Twitter, characterizing the doctors' comments as denigrating, false and extremely racist. While this was an isolated incident in an increasingly heated debate, research and thinking in this area led to accusations that the Global South was all but absent in scientific and/or medical collaboration, or its presence limited to being a subject rather than a creator of science. These attitudes, in turn, have led to calls to decolonize global health, not least as a form of (African) resistance (Ahmed 2020).

In these and other ways, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed harmful and demeaning colonial mentalities, a kind of blindness connected to the lingering fantasy of European superiority, only further highlighting the urgent need for Europe to reckon with its colonial past. *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage* speaks directly to these debates. Put simply, our aim is to explore the common transnational European history of empires; to point to the traces of overt and unconscious forms of colonialism rooted in mentalities that have tended to imagine (and treat) the colonized as perpetual aliens and perpetual menials; to look at how new actors—citizens groups, contemporary artists, and figures within popular culture such as football icons—take on a critical heritage agenda to fight blatant colonial-style tendencies and racism; and, finally, to point to how a pluriversity of knowledges and ontologies can open up new horizons and futures for all of us. As we shall go on to explain, our perspective is future oriented and thus hopeful, if at the same time realistic and reflective.

Political climates in today's world

The atmosphere within which the ECHOES project originated was, on the one hand, an increasingly 'fortified' Europe created in response to the so-called 'refugee crisis' that reached new heights in 2015—an extended crisis that reverberated in every corner of the continent, despite the very different levels of exposure and forms of response across the EU's member states. On the other hand, anti-racist and decolonial agendas have continually unfolded, exemplified by the Black Lives Matter movement that since its origins in the United States in 2013 has targeted recurrent police murders and violence against black citizens. Similarly, #RhodesMustFall in Cape Town that took off in 2015 was a successful student movement that resulted in the statue of arch-imperialist John Cecil Rhodes being removed from the University of Cape Town campus (Chantiluke et al. 2018; Knudsen and Andersen 2019; Shepherd this volume, Chapter 3) and that also took issue with the fee system in South African education and the overly white and male-dominated curricula in higher education. #RhodesMustFall then spread to Europe. Oxford, for example, also saw a discussion of colonial symbols on campus as an outcome of the entangled relationship between Cape Town and Oxford, historically, symbolically and economically.

Responses to such anti-racist and decolonial activism and insurgencies often seek to secure and defend resilient imperial and colonial structures and ways of thinking, instead of accommodating (or even listening to or taking seriously) the claims of the protesters and making meaningful and more equitable changes (Mignolo and Walsh 2018). Counterinsurgent governance (Mirzoeff 2011) determined to uphold racialized distinctions and fortify borders—for example, the United States–Mexican border and the borders around the European Union—and to fuel domestic segregation policies and practices within nation-states seems repeatedly to prevail. The election of Jair

Bolsonaro in Brazil and Donald Trump in the United States, together with Brexit, can be seen as counterinsurgent (populist) movements and cultural backlashes fuelled by rising ‘hot nationalism’ (Billig 2017), and a broader mood of sentimental and nostalgic longing for a proud past that takes precedence over a threatening present that seems to offer only impotent and vulnerable points of identification.

Nostalgia for former empires and empowered cultural influence can likewise be seen in some countries in today’s Central and Eastern Europe. It is widely recognized that this region was subjected to forms of ‘internal colonialism’ by the West (the Habsburg empire as well as imperial and then Nazi Germany, and more generally by global modernity) and by the East (the Tsarist Russian empire and then the Soviet Union). But it is far less acknowledged that in some countries there are still signs of nostalgia for a former lost ‘empire’ stemming from the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the early modern era and in the political and cultural influence of Hungary on neighbouring nations until the end of the First World War (Glowacka-Grajper 2018). This was demonstrated by the colonial behaviour and mindsets of Poles who settled globally and by Polish elites at home who shared colonial aspirations of Western and Southern Europeans and whose power relations vis-à-vis peasants and ethnic minorities in today’s Ukraine and Belarus appear analogous to those between colonizer and colonized.

Authoritarian and strong nationalist tendencies so readily palpable in countries like Poland today can in part be seen as counterinsurgent governance—such as severe counter-reactions from governments towards insurgencies and threats from transnational institutions (EU, UN) or from internal groups (including women) criticizing political measures—in response to fears of the alleged loss of majoritarian authority in a postcolonial world. Yet colonial frames of reference repeatedly prove multidirectional, partial and often contradictory, regardless of where one looks. Early twenty-first-century Hungary provides a case in point. As one of many Central and Eastern European states to accede to the European Union during and after 2004, it was not long before Hungary’s prime minister, Viktor Orbán, accused the EU of ‘colonial’-style encroachments into Hungary’s domestic affairs in response to illiberal changes to the constitution and interference with the independence of its central bank and judiciary. ‘We will not be a colony’, Orbán proclaimed on 15 March 2012, Hungary’s National Day marking the 1848–1849 uprising against the Habsburg empire. Hungarians ‘will not live as foreigners dictate it, will not give up their independence or their freedom’, he insisted, before quickly moving beyond the mid-nineteenth century to compare EU pressures to Soviet domination until 1989. Nationalist assertions of this nature against ‘unsolicited assistance of foreigners wanting to guide our hands’ later underpinned the Hungarian state’s hostile response to the refugee crisis during and after 2015, when it went so far as to build a fence along its southern border with Serbia in an effort to keep out refugee inflows from Syria and other countries.¹ In this respect, Hungary’s approach resembled the

defensive exclusion of minorities—especially Muslims—seen in many other EU countries, not least other post-socialist states that could also claim to have been ‘colonized’ in different eras by different powers, most recently by the Soviet Union. Yet Hungary’s stance against refugee ‘intruders’ was far from a Central and Eastern European phenomenon: tragically, the refugee crisis generated defensive and outright racist responses across the continent whether we look to the Mediterranean-bordering countries in Europe’s south, to its west, or to its north.

We argue that what apparently prevails in today’s political climate are the systemic counterinsurgent, for example, imperialist/colonialist-style reactions towards decolonial agendas, expressed in political measures that reinforce domestic segregation and marginalization of certain groups and viewpoints that already speak from extremely disempowered positions. We see this in Danish policies to change the criteria and laws affecting disadvantaged housing areas (the so-called ghettos) in order to prevent ‘parallel’ societal formations (Windahl Pedersen 2020); in the forced separation of young married couples from non-Western countries, as happened with Syrian refugees, that resulted in Inger Støjberg, a former minister for Immigration, Integration and Housing, being impeached for illegal actions; and in revised rules for acquiring permanent citizenship for residents who have already lived and worked in Denmark for many years. These colonialist policies widen the scope of what Lewis R. Gordon, through close readings of Frantz Fanon and W. E. B. Du Bois, called the modern construction of ‘problem people’, whereby ‘groups of people are studied as problems instead of as people with problems’ (Gordon 2007) and the epistemic structure that supports such a category. Gordon wrote extensively on what it was—and is—like to live in a body labelled as a ‘problem’. Decolonial feminist Madina Tlostanova has expanded on this category of ‘problem people’ in our contemporary world to apply it to formerly colonized subjects, enslaved persons and indigenous peoples, along with today’s refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. She points to how Muslim ‘others’ are constructed as the new emblematic ‘monsters’ within Europe and how the post-socialist ‘others’ are likewise included in this category. No one, she argues, is immune from becoming the new ‘other’, a disorientating experience that can extend so far as to become excluded from humanity in general (Tlostanova 2018, 2020; see also discussions in Buettner 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020). Exclusionary mechanisms of many varieties persist in postcolonial societies, with the groups targeted shifting and extending beyond those from societies understood as having experienced recognized forms of historical colonialism.

The political field invested with imperialist/colonialist reactions also reveals itself in different countries’ research policies that interfere with and aim to manipulate the very subject matter of academic agendas. In June 2020, the French government criticized French academics who incorporated references to thinkers working in postcolonial and decolonial studies into their research methodology. The latter were accused of running counter to

the ‘values of the Republic’ and borrowing from the ideologies of ‘North American’ campuses. In the autumn of 2020, the debate grew even more virulent, with the publication of ‘Le manifesto des 100’ (‘The manifesto of 100’) published in *Le Monde*, an online petition signed by 258 scholars from various disciplines against what they called ‘left-wing Islamophilia’. This manifesto described an alleged alliance between defenders of radical Islam and scholars working with US-imported approaches to indigenous peoples, race and decolonial ‘ideologies’.² The rapid deterioration seen in the French academic context involved a strong conservative backlash against postcolonial and decolonial studies, as well as gender and intersectionality, with those who feared they were losing their intellectual and institutional hegemony responding with aggressive attacks. As a result of this, in February 2021, Frédérique Vidal, France’s Minister of Higher Education and Research, requested an investigation into ‘left-wing Islamophilia’ within universities. This move quickly prompted demands for her dismissal in a statement signed by 22,000 academics, alongside a spate of public commentaries and articles contributing to long-running debates about the supposedly threatened state of the Republic (Onishi 2021). We thus currently find ourselves within a very complex dynamic of actions-reactions-counterreactions in which the decolonial is only a part.

Our book should be read against the general mood of lack of ‘futurability’, particularly in the Northern/Western hemisphere. This lack of futurability is not only put forward and analyzed as a political phenomenon but is also flagged as an important epistemic issue. Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatscheni, historian and Chair of the Epistemologies of the Global South with emphasis on Africa at the University of Bayreuth, calls for new concepts to replace or add to the ‘exhausted northern epistemologies’ (Omanga 2020), while Italian thinker Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi (2017) points to the extreme difficulty of opening the future for unpredictability, as the political has become impotent in contemporary societies and only shows itself via authoritarian and fascist longings towards past and nostalgic potency. We in ECHOES agree that an important stake in decolonial endeavours is exactly the future or, more precisely, how multi-perspectival desires to re-future the present reveal themselves. Tlostanova similarly describes de-futuring as a political strategy designed to keep people in a permanent state of exception, meaning exactly to take away their future, and she calls on indigenous, feminist and decolonial thinkers (including Enrique Dussel and Maria Lugones, among others) to refuture the present (2018). Sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, for his part, clearly thematizes the problem of future-less societies in his dichotomy between a sociology of absence and a sociology of emergence (Sousa Santos 2011), in the same way that he points to the reigning political and intellectual exhaustion in Europe and the Global North (Sousa Santos 2017).

Berardi, Tlostanova and Sousa Santos all turn to collective and connective actions and practices, such as self-directed citizen-based initiatives and artistic or civic imagination, in order to open the future, as we also do in ECHOES.

We focus on how colonial heritage is dealt with and practiced in urban spaces by actors including heritage professionals at a city level (specifically within city museums), citizen associations, social movements, or looser organizations grappling with difficult or dissonant colonial history and heritage and with site-specific artistic works and reworkings of existing monuments and in situ places. We support the close connection between heritage and the future so elegantly addressed by the Heritage Futures research project and its publication *Cultural Heritage and the Future* that offers a succinct definition of what ‘future thinking’ means for heritage: ‘By “future thinking” we mean the way people anticipate what lies several years or even decades ahead informing how they act today’ (Holtorf and Högberg 2021: 23). This future-oriented perspective is indeed what decolonial theory, thinking and practice revolve around. As philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe has put it, ‘Postcolonial thinking writes itself into the future’ and ‘holds the dream of a new kind of humanism, a critical humanism that is based on the shared condition of what separates us’ (Mbembe 2010: 85, 83, our translation).

Heritage discourses

Central to our argument is the notion of heritage, an omnipresent cultural phenomenon that accumulates in museums, archives and the landscape and that continually increases and diversifies (Harrison 2013; Harvey 2001; Holtorf 2005; Smith 2006). Heritage is notoriously difficult to define, resting as it does alongside words and ideas like culture, tradition and identity and thus constituting a pluridisciplinary field. The well-known opposition between heritage which takes the form of material relics such as monuments, buildings, artefacts and memorials, and heritage considered as a discourse in which each present constructs its own past (whether for strategic political reasons or through preservation policies), is at stake here. In the former connotation, heritage is commonly understood as an intrinsic material quality and long inseparable from notions of European artistic and cultural civilization. This has often proven a top-down, elitist approach that privileges certain objects, rituals and institutions over others at various historical junctures. Heritage in this sense can often be triumphalist in tone, celebrating heroic deeds or commemorating key events in a nation’s or a continent’s history. To illustrate this, one chapter in this book looks at how contemporary Europe lives under the shadow of a range of colonial histories and legacies (Buettner this volume, Chapter 1), while another investigates the imperial nostalgia behind Brexit as an affective longing for a presumed heroic past (Kølvraa this volume, Chapter 2). The discursive concept of heritage, on the other hand, considers heritage as a renewable resource that is transformed in any given present (Holtorf 2005, 130; Lowenthal 1985, 412; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1995). Although considered problematic, colonial heritage as used strategically to construct a local Shanghai identity forms the basis of curator Lu Jiansong’s evaluation of the ‘Modern Shanghai’ exhibition at the Shanghai

History Museum (this volume, Chapter 7). Other chapters in this book discuss the institutional and historical barriers to decolonial approaches found at museums and world heritage sites (Ariese et al. this volume, Chapter 6; Chuva et al. this volume, Chapter 9).

As recent disputes over academic curricula, statues and the legacies of empire have demonstrated, a tremendous amount remains invested in these different notions of heritage, both for those contesting majoritarian viewpoints and from those defending them (Harrison 2013, 9). Indeed, the use of the word *heritage* in and of itself often gives rise to suggestions that dominant white European cultures are under attack from non-white protesters and radicals. In consequence, heritage for some is simply a resilient important marker of whiteness associated with a specific set of achievements—artistic, cultural, military, or political—that powerful figures insist must be protected at all costs. To suggest otherwise—or even to question the status quo—is all too often dismissed as ‘wokery’, a term that in many ways has come to define the culture wars currently sweeping across and beyond Europe. Such reactions are in fact signs of a counter-insurgent reaction from a majoritarian white viewpoint determined to protect heritage sites and monuments, and to accentuate a version of the past that advocates pride, rather than shame, dismay or anger, when difficult heritage finds itself placed under an intrusive, critical microscope (Macdonald 2009).

The insurgent contestation of heritage in public spaces and heritage institutions frequently comes from dissenting and often marginalized voices that demand to be heard and met on equal terms, especially when it comes to questions like ‘Whose heritage?’ and ‘What is heritage for?’ (The recovery of indigenous traditions, including the oral tradition of storytelling, is just one aspect of this type of ‘inclusion’.) In recent years, for instance, a series of debates have erupted in Belgium around increasingly controversial statues of King Léopold II and the atrocities carried out in his name in the Congo Free State between 1885 and 1908 (Buettner 2016, this volume, Chapter 9; Lusulusa 2020). Meanwhile, Italian activists in Milan daubed the statue of the twentieth-century journalist Indro Montanelli with red paint in June 2020 in an orchestrated protest against his questionable activities in Ethiopia in the 1930s and 1940s, which led to accusations of racism and rape (Pozzi 2020). In Britain, angry #RhodesMustFall protesters in Oxford targeted Oriel College’s statue of Cecil Rhodes, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in South Africa (1890–96) and advocate of vigorous settler colonialism, demanding its immediate removal (see also Shepherd this volume, Chapter 3). Here again, these debates were fuelled not only by the ongoing presence of monuments of a colonial nature in public spaces but also by the marginalization and structural racism encountered by non-white communities living in Europe’s cities, many of them long victims of deep-seated prejudice and discrimination.

ECHOES takes the notion of heritage as discourse and socio-cultural processes as a point of departure, but it is also clear that battles around ‘whose

heritage’ and ‘what is heritage for’ revolve around existing colonial vestiges or in situ places, particularly in urban areas. Heritage practices of removal and re-emergence (see below) are capable of rendering colonial legacies and artefacts, some of which have gone largely unnoticed or seemingly all but forgotten, newly visible and subject to fierce questioning (Edensor 2019). Indicatively, however, at the same moment that they come under the critical scrutiny of heritage actors they also become seen by others as historical monuments whose preservation is considered crucial. As Paul R. Mullins argues in his work on the American South, Confederate monuments have become ‘screens’ for anti-racist and civil rights struggles in the contemporary United States. Having been put up to normalize racism and present the Southern cause as honourable, these monuments have become contested sites of memory that appear to be disappearing, albeit at an extremely slow and halting pace and in the face of a strong backlash (Mullins 2021a, 2021b).

The decolonial necessity and option

Decolonial thinking and practice has gained transnational momentum since 2000 and is associated mainly but not exclusively with South American thinkers and activists such as Enrique Dussel, Anibal Quijano, Ramón Grosfoguel, Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Walter Dignolo, along with feminist and indigenous thinkers like María Lugones, Gloria Anzaldúa, Linda Tihwai Smith and Catherine E. Walsh (Shepherd 2018). Our chapters also take much inspiration from key African thinkers and writers who explicitly thematize the decolonial, including Achille Mbembe, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Chinua Achebe and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni.

In comparing decolonial thought with postcolonialism as it emerged as an intellectual movement in the 1980s and 1990s, we can identify significant differences between these two at times overlapping approaches. One extends from postcolonial theory’s close association with leading proponents of South Asian and Middle Eastern origins and research foci such as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, while much decolonial theory has originated in and emanated from South America. Then there are differences related to time: whereas postcolonialism mainly refers to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the colonial order began much earlier in the Americas, from the fifteenth century onwards (Bhambra 2014). Alongside these differences in time and space is the scale and impact of colonialism, depending on the place in question. European-imported diseases, together with violent acts of suppression, led to the extermination of approximately 65 million people in less than 50 years in Latin America. By contrast, despite colonialism’s immense and varied repercussions across Asia, the Middle East and Africa, Europeans did not succeed in destroying indigenous cultures with anything approaching the same intensity, which is one of many reasons why the long-term impacts of colonialism vary so markedly (Quijano 2007: 170). This difference in scale plays a role in analyses of colonial aftermaths in postcolonial

and in decolonial thought. Postcolonialism often hones in on symbolic marginalization, linguistic othering and aesthetic forms of resistance, while many decolonial thinkers emphasize the resultant global geopolitical hierarchy still persisting in our contemporaneity.

We find these two lines of thought to be equally important rather than mutually exclusive, playing themselves out as persistent dynamics in our understanding of economic, political and socio-cultural contexts. Thus, while we continue to be inspired by the tradition for close readings of the symbolic structures, narrative worlds and discursive processes of colonial subjectivation which one finds in classics of postcolonial scholarship, we are equally inspired by four features of decolonial thought that have emerged or been given new emphasis in more recent scholarship. First of all, we adopt the idea of *pluriversality* to replace Eurocentric universalism and Eurocentric hegemony. We offer place-based perspectives and highlight their reactions towards multiple colonialisms and neo-colonialisms that many places and regions have been and still are subjected to (Oldfield 2018). All of these perspectives have valuable contributions to offer. Indeed, this book acknowledges different kinds of voices and writings, including those that at first sight might seem uncritical of colonialism and/or notions of curatorship (Lu, this volume, Chapter 7). Moreover, we also recognize that academic paradigms need to rest alongside, and work together with, other models or ecologies of knowledge and intersectional perspectives if we are to collectively work towards re-futuring initiatives. This perspective is visible in our volume in the wide range of case studies from both inside and outside of Europe, as well as in the space given to heritage practitioners and artists.

Secondly, pluriversality does not translate as relativism or local nationalism but as *trans- and inter-cultural* perspectives that understand cultures and societies as intertwined and present alternatives to the well-known strategies of ‘othering’ (BOZAR 2019). Inter- and trans-perspectives are present as the decolonial solution in the chapters on the future of Europe (Chapter 16), global curatorship (Chapter 8) and heritage diplomacy and artistic collaborations across borders (Chapter 14). Thirdly, we have made use of the performative practice-element in decolonial thinking, which manifests itself in our strong focus on heritage practices and in the strong element of activist agency and process that comes with the word *decolonize*, or decolonizing minds, practices and heritage institutions. Citizen activists and artists ‘artivistically’ create new worlds through their art or through ‘guerrilla memorialization’, as Alan Rice puts it (2011). Universes are created that challenge and critique hegemonic versions and gazes. In so doing, they invent new ways of ‘touching’ their audiences—such as in the virtual experiments we follow in Meghna Singh’s chapter discussing Cape Town—and offer new embodied and affective forms of learning, experiencing and self-reflecting that extend from activist and artists’ aesthetic interventions in public spaces (Mignolo 2008; Mignolo and Vásquez 2013; Mignolo 2014; Schütz 2018). This often occurs in urban spaces that are already fuelled by socio-material intensity and strong

place-based emotions, linked directly to the colonial past, such as the harbour areas in Rio (Chapter 9) and Lisbon (Chapter 4).

The fourth aspect concerns the importance we place upon using decolonial thinking and practice as a means of opposing de-futuring tendencies, in that such thinking points unequivocally towards a future of more diversity and less inequality. Not that such a future is necessarily within close reach—in fact, far from it. But alternative scenarios are nonetheless frequently tried out as alternative lifestyles and economic organizations on an experimental basis by groups defeated by capitalism and colonialism (Gibson-Graham et al. 2013; Sousa Santos 2017). *Re-futuring* happens in decolonial endeavours that are invested with the emotion and affect of hope and it happens in the politicized heritage modality of removal and re-emergence, as will be discussed further below.

This volume's focus is the re-energized breath of global decolonial agendas in academia, the arts, the heritage and museum sectors and in social movements and civic commitments as they engage with colonial heritage and anti-racist issues in general. Whether Europe-based initiatives lead the way or, as with #RhodesMustFall and other episodes, they take direct inspiration from developments on other continents, we believe that the time is ripe for Europe to make colonialism and its consequences part of the difficult heritage that it needs to confront and reflect on, in order to become a trustworthy collaborator in the building of future global alliances and cooperation. This 'ripeness' reveals itself in the mobility, dissemination and contamination of insurgent movements from one local context to another and in the ability to form a long-term social movement with decolonial agendas. The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in late May 2020 provides a key case in point.

Floyd's tragic murder did not in and of itself provide the inspiration for Black Lives Matter, which first emerged in 2013 on the back of other egregious killings of African Americans by the police. Nonetheless, it was indisputably a key turning point in its power and transnational visibility (Harrebye 2015; Lebron 2017; Tarrow 2012). The 8-minute, 46-second-long video recorded on a teenage girl's cell phone went viral, bringing Floyd's death to the eyes of the mainstream and social media alike across much of the world. The murder became a *lieu de mémoire*, an immaterial memory site whose importance cannot be overstated, and it also became Black Lives Matter's tipping point as an anti-racist and distinctly global movement (Erl 2011).

Three days after Floyd's brutal death, three American artists, Xena Goldman, Cadex Herrera and Greta McLain, painted a mural on the spot where he was killed, adding a material and localized layer to the video's immateriality. They completed it within 12 hours with the help of Niki Alexander and Pablo Hernandez. The 6-metre long, 2-metre high image depicts George Floyd's portrait in the centre of a huge sunflower, in which the names of all the victims of police brutality in recent years are inscribed. Breonna Taylor, a young caregiver mistakenly shot eight times in her own

apartment in the middle of the night of 13 March 2020 in Louisville, Kentucky, was only one of these. George Floyd's name unfolds in huge letters that act as megaphones. Silhouettes of the activists in the letters complete the painting dated 25 May 2020 in predominantly yellow and blue colours. A singular message is inscribed at the bottom of the portrait, 'I Can Breathe Now'—as if George Floyd had only achieved this much-needed freedom after his death. A video showing this installation also went viral within a very short time, joining the site of his death as another interrelated *lieu de mémoire*, speaking to the series of political and cultural actions protesting the unbreathable climate and adding to Floyd's legacy. This urban painting in Floyd's memory then became projected and thus remediated on a large screen during his funeral ceremony in Minneapolis (Zabunyan 2020).

Decolonial methodologies

The ECHOES project has likewise turned to a heuristic analytical framework for assessing heritage practices in general. As we have outlined this elsewhere, we will limit ourselves here to a brief sketch of its main components.³ In order to more fully engage with heritage practices at both the formal and informal levels, we have suggested four modalities—repression, removal, reframing and re-emergence—to confront and analyze the manifold contours and ramifications of the colonial past. Repression denotes practices that involve a silencing or denial of the colonial past, which is what has (and still is) happening most of the time across much of Europe. Removal denotes situations where the presence or absence of this heritage in public spaces, archives and discourses is actively or often antagonistically politicized, while reframing points to situations that seek to incorporate this heritage into new consensual—and at times commercialized—frames of reference. A nuanced analysis and discussion of reframing and re-emergent perspectives is seen in Peixoto and Ferreira's chapter on the intercultural Todos festival in Lisbon (Chapter 11). Re-emergence is used for the practices that, at least potentially, open up social space for new voices, affects and bodies forging relations or 'contact zones' (Ifversen 2018; Pratt 1991) between actors, which transcend both the antagonistic dichotomies of removal and the domesticating pressures of reframing, thereby opening up the possibility for a heritage practice that presents a lost opportunity from the past that returns to offer itself as a potential future horizon. Re-emergence transgresses linear temporalities as it connects and moves back and forth between the past, the present and the future. The dichotomy between imaginary and real is likewise dissolved to express the imagined decolonial future in the here and now (Knudsen 2018).

Re-emergence happens when heritage actors respond to memory erasure, epistemic colonization and persistent expressions of the political matrices that governed the past in urban space and public discourse. To take another example, it also occurs when academics or heritage institutions begin listening to the testimonies of local—often diasporic—populations and groups

and their ‘banal’ everyday experiences of racism and marginalization (Mahdjoub this volume, Chapter 10). The unfolding of the perspectives and life stories of these new heritage actors is in itself an act of resistance that offers decolonial alternatives to official narratives (Gianolla et al. this volume, Chapter 4). Re-emergence appears in the form of new heritage actors, as well as new epistemologies, narratives and phenomenologies that come to the fore to take issue with and challenge the predominance of Eurocentric paradigms, whether inside or outside Europe. Re-emergence can also be something as simple as art coming out of an encounter, as in the case of Shawn Naphtali Sobers’s auto-ethnographic film *Tell Me the Good News*, which was made during his research visit to Cape Town in 2019 as part of the ECHOES programme (Sobers 2019). Re-emergence as agency distributed to new actors commenting on and intervening in established art historical Eurocentric white versions of public space representations is also seen in Chapters 5, 8 and 12.

As an entangled temporality between past, present and future, re-emergence happens in decolonial agendas in festivals, art installations, visual and sculptural works, street performances, curatorial works, documentaries, exhibitions, civic rituals and applied associations’ work. It is propelled by emotions of hope, joy and vital energy, as the future morphs into the here and now and opens doors to new possibilities. Filled with hope for the future, contemporary agents invent sociologies and aesthetics of emergence (Bloch 1995; Sousa Santos 2011) that can retain their hold and allure, regardless of what the future actually brings (Rigney 2018). The ‘re-futuring’ of societies occurs through decolonial endeavours that proceed in the subjunctive ‘as if’, thereby holding on to the possibility that the future can be shaped as an improvement on current conditions (Miyazaki 2004; Pedersen 2012). Re-emergence has also become apparent in Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon, where different black and immigrant communities have produced multi-layered counter-narratives and provided previews of decolonial pluriverse urban spaces through their heritage practices in harbour areas that remain heavily haunted by colonialism in its most brutal variants (Chuva et al. this volume, Chapter 9).

Yet another valuable methodological insight that all ECHOES participants have experienced extends from our own diverse backgrounds and life experiences. Without falling into the trap of thinking that ‘unless I have undergone the exact same experience as the other, I know nothing of his or her pain and should simply shut up’, as Achille Mbembe has put it (Mbembe in Bangstad and Tummyr Nilsen 2019), ECHOES affiliates have at times found their legitimacy as researchers of evolving heritage landscapes questioned or even challenged. We have been enriched by these encounters and discussions, coming away with greatly enhanced self-awareness and better able to reflect on our own subjective position. Those of us who are white, for example, have valued decolonial methodologies as a constructive means of grappling with ‘white innocence’ (Tihuwai Smith 2012; Tuck and Yang 2012; Wekker 2016).

Indeed, this approach lay behind Britta Timm Knudsen's attempt to distribute the authorial voice in her contribution to this volume (Chapter 14).

Decolonial re-emergent futures

As suggested above, at the present time it is possible only to catch glimpses of a decolonial world that has not yet arrived. These very glimpses, however, have taken us further in the direction of mobilizing and 're-futuring' societies. To go even further still towards a more equitable future requires an acute awareness of one's own positionality in the field of colonial-decolonial studies that extends to acknowledging structural differences and inequalities, not to mention histories of suffering that are impossible to overcome and lay to rest. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have termed this an ethics of incommensurability that demands that, however irreparable some injustices might be, they nevertheless require that we continue to try to address them and make amends (Tuck and Yang 2012, 35). Katrine Remmen Dirckinck-Holmfeld also advocates for reparative critical practice in her new work on *Entangled Archives*, in which she focuses on the colonial histories of the Virgin Islands, Ghana, Greenland, India and Denmark with the aim of bringing artists and researchers from these different places together to form a transoceanic network to relive and repair painful pasts (Dirckinck-Holmfeld 2015; Jakobsen 2021). The encounters between these different groups are likely to be replete with ambivalence and prove disturbing and unsettling, yet they still offer the prospect of constructing a pluriverse world shared in common for precisely this reason. Intercultural encounters as zones of contact and friction are based on structural asymmetries and must work hard to cultivate respect, tolerance and ethno-relativism (Ifversen 2018). How is it possible to imagine a Europe other than the fortress we know from the 'refugee crisis'? Here, one could take as a point of departure the argument that Europe—not least owing to its colonial history—is already entangled with other continents, and that to take those entanglements seriously and responsibly would totally transform the idea of Europe (Ifversen this volume, Chapter 16).

Our volume's strong focus on art and aesthetic experiences has a double focus. On the one hand, embodied life experiences are more easily communicated through art forms that give life and expression to the sensuous and affective layers of experiences. The artists that are present across many chapters of this book all use highly different media and strategies of communications: we have paintings, video works, installations, performative arts, film, photographs, and also virtual realities technologies. The medium of communication to wider audiences is highly important, as it decides how audiences are supposed to engage with and *feel* the experience in question (Witcomb 2015). The medium of walking, for example, is a common tool to make publics themselves embody the traces of the past in an urban landscape. Bristol-based artist Christelle Pellecuer does this with her film *Echoes of Our Ancestors* (2021) that takes us on an embodied and poetic journey into

Bristol's slave-owning past.⁴ Echoing the strolling, the work conceives of heritage in its mobility and no longer as an immutable anchor of the past, which opens up political and poetic possibilities in a future to be. To the extent to which the art forms are relational and deploy interfaces for audiences to engage with and immerse themselves into, while at the same time creating an escapist self-forgetting experience, the more they succeed in producing self-reflective subjects that have been touched by art. Meghna Singh's work in the immersive multimedia installation of *Container* deals at one and the same time with a lot of ambiguous feelings in the publics she is addressing: unruly moods and atmosphere-creation, feelings of empathy with the victims of historical and present-day slavery, and the responsibility-taking necessary to correct errors (Chapter 13). This mix of sometimes contradictory feelings is productive, we argue, as it shows very clearly that a decolonial future is not like a seamless dream but presents a delicate and self-aware balance out of all our comfort zones, pointing towards new horizons of collaborations that will make us all grow and feel alive.

Finally, our work has also made us aware of the need for more sensitive and innovative approaches when engaging with heritage and science diplomacy. Although models for International Cultural Relations (ICR) are commonly represented by interactions between states and state agents, we argue that a more complex approach is required that extends to a wider range of actors, including 'mid-space' actors. As our research reveals, those working on the ground, whether they be museum curators, artists or citizen groups, often create projects that involve a deeper engagement with colonial legacies in their communities. There is a great opportunity to further this agenda, we believe, by supporting and encouraging the work of such grassroots actors, much of which is focused on the restitution of colonial artefacts (Hicks 2020). Whether labelled as heritage diplomacy or International Cultural Relations, international collaborative projects that address the colonial past need to be based on a foundation of trust and mitigate against unequal power relations between partners. Active listening and the ability to foster genuine intercultural dialogue are skills that policymakers and EU professionals at all levels need to exercise routinely. This includes an openness towards integrating a wider range of actors in diplomatic activities and involving them in policy development processes. We believe that such an approach is both urgent and necessary, especially if we are to arrive at a more equitable representation of colonial legacies across Europe (Clopot et al. this volume, Chapter 15).

Structure of the book

Part I, 'Haunted worlds: ghosts of the colonial past', sets the stage with chapters that explore how Europe's long history of empires within and outside the continent have left palpable present-day legacies, both well-known and lesser known, some of which are still widely embraced while others are

increasingly contested. Elizabeth Buettner's contribution on 'Europe and its Entangled Colonial Pasts' examines the multiple imperial entanglements of countries in Europe's North and East as well as its West and South; moreover, she charts how Europe's colonialisms, external and internal alike, have shaped the European Union's evolution since its origins in the aftermath of the Second World War in the era of late overseas colonialism and decolonization. Her transnational chapter is followed by Christoffer Kølvrå's close reading of Sam Mendes's highly acclaimed film, *1917*. Its production and ultimate release in 2019 coincided with the Brexit referendum's aftermath, rendering it a cultural product speaking to multifaceted forms of British nostalgia for both an imperial past and for a future as a Global Britain freed from EU constraints.

Part I then shifts from Kølvrå's nationally framed example to three local urban case studies. Nick Shepherd's analysis of Cecil Rhodes's spectral presence across the landscape and built environment of the University of Cape Town's campus in South Africa takes the #RhodesMustFall movement as its starting point. Cristiano Gianolla, Giuseppina Raggi and Lorena Sancho Querol devote their chapter to African- and Afro-descended life stories that provide greatly needed 'subaltern', plural historical perspectives that serve as critical counterpoints to the celebratory early-modern 'Discoveries'-oriented heritage space that still dominates key parts of multicultural Lisbon's waterfront. Attention shifts from Lisbon to Warsaw within Łukasz Bukowiecki's piece that explores not an established, world-renowned and deeply controversial white imperialist of Rhodes's stature but rather a long-forgotten Nigerian-origin jazz musician, August Agboola Browne (whose *nom de guerre* was 'Ali'), apparently the only black participant in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Ali is a newly rediscovered historical figure in contemporary Warsaw who has generated multiple forms of decolonial memory activism that point towards new possible Polish futures in this post-socialist Eastern European capital.

Part II, 'Contemporary heritage practices: new agents, urban space events, and intercultural encounters', launches with three chapters that hone in on museums and curatorship and that similarly extend across and outside Europe. Csilla Ariese, Laura Pozzi and Joanna Wawrzyniak discuss and contrast city museums' diverse forms of engagement with local colonial pasts and surviving heritage from the perspective of institutions located in Amsterdam, Warsaw and Shanghai that reveal 'No Single Road to Decolonization'. Their assessment is followed by a contribution by the curator of one of the museums they discuss, Lu Jiansong, who oversaw the permanent 'Modern Shanghai' exhibition at the Shanghai History Museum, which opened to the public in 2018. Jiansong naturally provides a different vantage point on the way the colonial past has been re-evaluated in early twenty-first-century China. One of the challenges faced by his team of curators, for instance, was to highlight the invasive and destructive aspects of colonialism, while at the same time emphasizing its constructive elements. Another was to make space within this narrative for Shanghai's more recent

revolutionary history. Elvan Zabunyan's chapter continues this emphasis on curatorial initiatives, casting its spotlight on the innovative contributions of the late Okwui Enwezor (1963–2019) to the globalized art world. His international art events in Munich, Kassel, Seville, Paris and Venice between 2001 and 2015 showcased the entanglement of colonial history not only with contemporary artistic practices but equally with contemporary politics. Like few other practitioners, Enwezor exemplified how decolonial gestures caused productive upheaval that unsettled predominant Eurocentric paradigms by presenting competing interpretations of the past by artists of non-European descent.

The next contributions within Part II concern colonial culture's echoes within visual culture and site-specific art starting with Rio de Janeiro. Márcia Chuva, Leila Bianchi Aguiar and Brenda Coelho Fonseca demonstrate the value of African-descended people's life stories in understanding the personal and collective meanings of the Valongo Wharf and New African Cemetery heritage sites linked with Brazil's history of slavery. Decolonizing heritage in this instance involves black resistance to the structural racism that remains deeply embedded within Brazilian society today. The next three chapters return to European settings that have long been multicultural spaces transformed by postcolonial migration. The first is Paulo Peixoto and Claudino Ferreira's analysis of the Todos festival, an annual event on Lisbon's calendar since 2009. With local authorities and the independent arts scene deliberately showcasing Lisbon as a multicultural, multi-ethnic and multireligious city, Portugal's still-powerful colonial history and memory (also discussed by Gianolla, Raggi and Querol in Part I, as noted above) becomes productively reframed within 'contact areas' where different groups converge and collide.

We then hear directly from individual artists themselves, including Dalila Mahdjoub in her own intervention as well as from Badr El Hammami and Mohammed Laouli (as interviewed by Marine Schütz), three Marseille-based artists of Franco-Maghrebi backgrounds who illuminate how their artistic practice confronts not only colonial heritage still prominent within French urban space but also how racism and contempt wreaks social and emotional havoc within ethnic minority communities from former colonies. From Marseille, we return to Cape Town with Meghna Singh's discussion of her collaborative, multimedia, virtual reality installation *Container*. Singh's initiative connects South Africa's history of slavery together with forms of modern-day exploitation in the aftermath of the 2013 archaeological discovery of a Portuguese slave ship that sank in 1794 with 212 slaves on board.

Decolonizing Colonial Heritage concludes with Part III, 'Imagining decolonial futures'. The first two chapters investigate new decolonial ways of thinking about Europe today and its inseparability from historical entanglements with other continents. Britta Timm Knudsen's contribution, 'Decolonial Countervisuality', offers an experimental approach to decolonial methodology in which she invited three heritage practitioners (Sorana Munsya,

Benjamine Laini Lusulusa and Stephanie Collingwoode Williams) on board as co-researchers and co-analysts of a Belgian–Congolese documentary. Distributing the authorial voice and its attendant power allowed multiple perspectives on the film to emerge, demonstrating the hopeful potential of work that gives space to a diverse range of actors and voices. Collaborative methods like these also sit at the heart of the next chapter by Cristina Clopot, Casper Andersen and John Oldfield on ‘New Diplomacy and Decolonial Heritage Practices’. In moving beyond traditional state-centred approaches, ‘heritage diplomacy’ or International Cultural Relations prioritizes more egalitarian forms of ‘listening’ by fostering meaningful engagements with non-state actors such as curators, artists, musicians and citizens’ groups. Intercultural dialogues of this nature offer promising opportunities to constructively engage with past colonial relationships and work against ongoing unequal power relations through building trust. By way of conclusion, Jan Ifversen’s chapter on ‘Decolonial Voices, Colonialism and the Limits of European Liberalism’ links Europe’s historical record of dealing with ‘outsiders’, including European Jews, to recent histories of excluding ethnic minorities located within and beyond the continent, not least Muslims. He links the ‘Jewish Question’ with the ‘Muslim Question’, which has taken on increased visibility and urgency during and after 2015’s so-called refugee crisis confronting the EU. Grappling with contemporary ‘crises’ by situating them in the context of longer histories of internal and colonial oppression highlights the limits of European liberalism in the past, as well as the present: crucially, it also suggests new ways of imagining an intercultural, transnational, and entangled Europe of the future. As he writes: ‘If we are to look for promises for Europe, we must turn to the outsiders, the misfits disturbing our coordinates of citizenship, community and belonging. Perhaps this is Europe’s only hope’.

Notes

- 1 Simon Taylor, “Orbán Accuses EU of Colonialism,” *Politico*, 16 March 2012, <https://www.politico.eu/article/orban-accuses-eu-of-colonialism/>.
- 2 “Une centaine d’universitaires alertent: ‘Sur l’islamisme, ce qui nous menace, c’est la persistance du déni.’” Tribune Collectif *Le Monde*, 31 October 2020. https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/10/31/une-centaine-d-universitaires-alertent-sur-l-islamisme-ce-qui-nous-menace-c-est-la-persistance-du-deni_6057989_3232.html.
- 3 A fuller presentation of methods is available online: Casper Andersen, Britta Timm Knudsen, and Christoffer Kølvråa, “Keywords: Anthology Exploring the Keywords of Colonial Heritage,” <https://keywordsechoes.com> (accessed 8 April 2021); Casper Andersen, Britta Timm Knudsen, and Christoffer Kølvråa, “Methodological Toolkit,” *University of Hull*, 15 March 2019, <https://hull-repository.worktribe.com/output/1429845/methodological-toolkit>; and Britta Timm Knudsen and Christoffer Kølvråa, “Affective Infrastructures of Re-emergence? Exploring Modalities of Heritage Practices in Nantes,” *Heritage and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159032X.2021.1883981>.

- 4 This film, which was part-financed by ECHOES, was released in May 2021. Christelle Pellecuer and Michael Jenkins, *Echoes of our Ancestors*, <https://vimeo.com/555261712> (accessed 27 July 2021)

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