

# ECHOOES

EUROPEAN COLONIAL HERITAGE MODALITIES IN ENTANGLED CITIES

## Museum of Warsaw Report #2

### Dealing with Difficult Pasts at the Museum of Warsaw: Implications of Curatorial Memory Practices

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Researched within Work Package 3 '*City Museums and Multiple Colonial Pasts*'  
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# Dealing with Difficult Pasts at the Museum of Warsaw: Implications of Curatorial Memory Practices

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## Introduction

This report was developed within the Horizon2020 project *ECHOES: European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities* as part of its work package 3 on ‘City Museums and Multiple Colonial Pasts.’ This work package conducts in-depth, qualitative, comparative analyses of three city museums, each representing distinct positions within colonial history: the Amsterdam Museum (AM), the Shanghai History Museum/Shanghai Revolution Museum (SHM) and the Museum of Warsaw (MW). A first set of reports, published earlier this year, provided summaries of the histories of the cities and contextual background about their museums, scrutinizing their position in national and urban institutional heritage settings, and identifying key narratives and main challenges (Ariese 2019a; Bukowiecki 2019; Pozzi 2019a).

The aim of the second set of reports is to test the ECHOES approach as a tool for museum analysis on examples drawn from our three cases studies. Given both the distinct research environment in each of our case studies and the work-in-progress character of these reports, at this stage we decided to frame our analysis independently from each other, although we all tackled the same set of questions: how to meaningfully engage with decolonial perspectives by empirically applying the core of the ECHOES approach, namely, the four modalities of heritage practice (repression, removal, reframing, and re-emergence), to museum research. We all conclude that the approach is useful, however in all cases we propose certain modifications shaped by our research contexts and expertise (see Ariese 2019b for AM; Pozzi 2019b for SHM).

The report on the Museum of Warsaw consists of three main parts. The first one discusses our methodological considerations stemming from our research field. It starts with pointing to problems with the variations in how the term ‘colonial’ is used in relation to Polish history and presents the way in which we have decided to solve these issues in our research. This part also proposes to connect the ECHOES approach with memory studies and to operationalize the ECHOES modalities in terms of curatorial memory practices; furthermore, it develops one more heritage modality/curatorial practice, namely, reanimation, as an addition to the overall scheme. In addition, this section highlights the data collected and the way we have analyzed it for the purpose of this report. In the second, main part of the report we discuss the selected examples from our field research from the perspective of five curatorial memory practices: repression, removal, reanimation, reframing, and re-emergence. In the third concluding part, we reveal the threefold relevance of our analysis: we connect the observed curatorial memory practices of the MW to broader memory discourses in Poland; we make some suggestions relating to local museum practices; and finally, we pinpoint some general instances in which the analysis in terms of the ECHOES approach proves to be especially useful.

The research on all three city museums is on-going and will result in one more set of reports on visitors and reception, thus ultimately forming a nine-part final report on city museums within ECHOES. As the research is still in progress, the results presented in this report may still be altered or expanded due to new findings or interpretations.

## Our Approach

### ***The Status of the ‘Colonial’ and ‘Imperial’ in the Academic and Public Discourse about Poland***

The way post-colonial theory/the decolonial approach can be applied to the case of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and specifically to Poland, has been the subject of many discussions. We have summarized the main lines of these discussions in an ECHOES working paper (Głowacka-Grajper & Wawrzyniak 2019), as well as in the previous report on the Museum of Warsaw (Bukowiecki 2019). In short, four historical periods fall under consideration as ‘colonial’ and/or ‘imperial’ in various streams of academic literature relating to Poland. Firstly, the early modern history when the nobility of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569-1791) made use of serfdom of peasants in the vast rural regions of Eastern Europe. Secondly, the age of empires (19<sup>th</sup> century) when the Commonwealth was divided among Austria, Prussia, and Russia (Warsaw was at the time a city in the Russian empire). Thirdly, the period of the Nazi occupation of Poland during the Second World War (1939-1945). Finally, the time of the country’s dependence on the USSR (1945-1989).

The arguments of Europe’s so-called ‘internal colonization,’ which run through a considerable number of works on the 19<sup>th</sup> century, characterize Eastern Europe as an inland equivalent of overseas colonization for both the German Reich and the Habsburg and Romanov Empires (Głowacka 2019). There is also a rising interest among scholars in the long-term connections between the 19<sup>th</sup>-century development of racism and conquest of land by the German Reich in Africa (including the widely discussed cases of Herero and Nama genocides), and Nazism, the Holocaust, and racist ideology against Slavs during the Second World War (e.g. Zimmerer 2011). Finally, the literature that discusses the Soviet empire through colonial lenses is enormous. It underlines that although Soviet communists fought imperialism and contributed to decolonization movements worldwide, they also created a quasi-colonial system in the USSR territories including Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Northern Asia, based on political subjugation and economic exploitation (e.g. Carey & Raciborski 2004). In addition to the above-mentioned four distinct periods of history, new streams of literature discuss various global entanglements of colonialism, including the involvement of Polish elites in European expansions in the Global South, such as the search for Polish overseas colonies in Africa and Latin America (recently, e.g. Grzechnik 2019; Valerio 2019), or building colonial-like relationships with Ruthenian rural populations in the Eastern borderland of the Polish Second Republic (1918-1939) which had resulted from mirroring life styles in overseas colonies (e.g. Bakuła 2014).

Besides these trends in the academic literature, the terms ‘colonial’ and ‘post-colonial’ have circulated in the post-1989 political discourses of both the progressive left and populist right, however with different meanings. To simplify, the left use post-/de-colonial approaches as a lens to criticize Polish mainstream catholic culture and its asymmetries based on class, gender, or ethnic differences. The right has been referring to the Polish situation as ‘post-colonial’ relating to its history of dependence on the Russian empire/Soviet Union on the one hand and on Prussia/Germany and today’s Western Europe on the other hand. In this vein, recently a leader of the governing Law and Justice party, Jarosław Kaczyński, called the present situation of Poland ‘semi-colonial,’ echoing similar statements by Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán referring to the alleged political and economic exploitation of both states by Western Europe in general and Brussels’ politicians in particular (e.g. Zgut 2019).

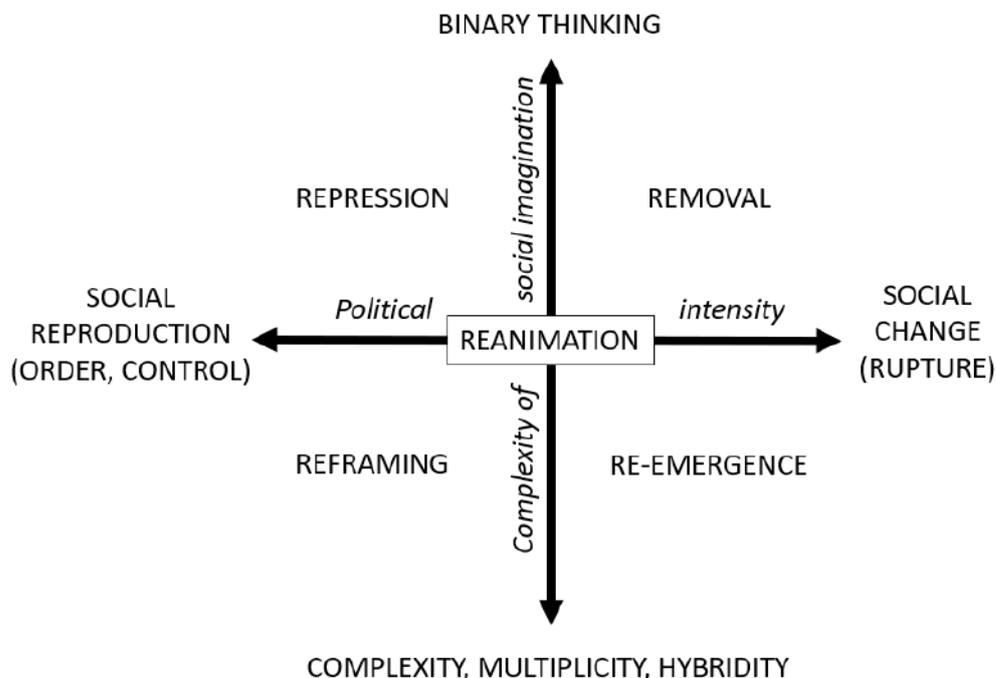
Despite the wide use of post- and de-colonial analogies, metaphors, and interpretations in various streams of academic literature and public discourse, the challenge to our research since the

beginning of the project has been that terms such as ‘colonial,’ ‘post-colonial,’ ‘de-colonial,’ and even ‘imperial’ have seldomly been used in Polish mainstream historiography, public history, or by museum professionals. Therefore, for the sake of this report we have decided to look for the colonial/de-colonial in etic rather than emic terms: to look for the ‘colonial’ from the *outside* perspective of an observer rather than from a perspective placed *within* the exhibition. More specifically, we looked for such museum representations that relate to the main periods of political dependence of the city on foreign powers – namely, the Russian domination of Warsaw in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Nazi occupation of the city, and the socialist period (1945-1989) – because these moments have been described in various streams of literature as ‘colonial’ enabling us to treat them as manifestations of ‘multiple colonialisms’ (Oldfield 2019; see also Table 1 below). However, we were also interested in exploring if and how a Warsaw city museum is engaged in the current global decolonial debate and if it tackles the issue of global colonial entanglements. Finally, by interviewing museum professionals, we observed how they reacted to the use of terms such as ‘colonial’ and ‘de-colonial’ in relation to, and to possible alterations of, the established categories of Polish public history by using post-/de-colonial terminology.

### **Adapting the ECHOES Framework to Museum Analysis**

#### From Four to Five Heritage Modalities

The point of departure for the ECHOES project has been four modalities for studying how colonial heritage is practiced today (Kølvraa 2019a). In the project’s *Methodological Toolkit* (Andersen et al. 2019) they have been elaborated, extended, and redefined as ‘keywords’ that are important for understanding how to deal with the legacies of colonialism in the contemporary heritage sector and in cultural diplomacy.



Graph 1: Extending the initial ECHOES framework with the fifth modality: reanimation. Image: Łukasz Bukowiecki adapted from Kølvraa 2019a.

The four modalities are: repression, removal, reframing, and re-emergence. From the very start, they were conceived as transitory rather than mutually exclusive. They move along two axes, the first one being the complexity of social imagination from binary to hybrid, and the other the political intensity from the reproduction of a socio-political order to its rupture and change (see Graph 1).

According to Kølvråa, **repression** as a mode of colonial heritage practice “signifies the various ways in which communities [...] refuse or reject dealing with their colonial heritage” (2019c: 32). Repression denotes the rejection of some sort of past experiences, but, at the same time, also their “lingering existence.” There are numerous examples of repression in the Polish heritage sector. In short, they relate to the complexity of relations with either dominating powers (e.g. Russians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century), dominated groups (e.g. Ruritanian peasants, Jews), or to the overseas colonial experiences of Polish intellectual elites.

In turn, **removal** means “an openly articulated desire to get rid of, eliminate or finally leave behind the colonial past” (Kølvråa 2019b: 36). Again, the examples of such removals in Poland are widespread, such as the physical destruction or replacement of buildings, monuments, and statues (e.g. the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russian Orthodox cathedral in Warsaw or 20<sup>th</sup>-century statues of communist leaders), changing museum exhibitions, or renaming sites (streets or entire cities). In the original ECHOES framework, removal is understood as the result of bottom-up social activism for change whereby the cry for removal helps to crystalize activist movements around a concrete demand that might become a nodal point of wider post-colonial discourse(s) and emotions. However, the example of the establishment of a post-dependent state like Poland shows that removal of colonial heritage is often also practiced from the top down by the authorities.

**Reframing** is a practice that treats heritage as a ‘renewable resource’ and leads to its depoliticization and commodification. It changes the meaning of what is presented by reworking its frame, *i.e.* the perception of how we see an object or a site, but without causing any ruptures in the social order. According to Kølvråa, in reframing “a hybridity often results from the very recontextualizing of colonial heritage in new milieus, highlighting the complex connectivity, the common space of experience and myriad mutual exchanges, thereby explicitly or implicitly undermining the dichotomous separation of colonized and colonizer” (2019a: 30). In the Polish context, the reframing of heritage often refers to memories of social and cultural life during communist times (1945-1989), as well as to the popular imaginary of Galicia as an autonomous, culturally diverse province of the Austro-Hungarian empire, located in today’s South-Eastern Poland and Western Ukraine.

Finally, **re-emergence** is “the modality through which we seek to capture those practices carrying the promise of entangling the colonial past with the hope of better futures, yet in a state of becoming” (Kølvråa 2019a: 27), or “a lost opportunity from the past that returns to offer itself for creating alternative futures” (Knudsen 2019a: 48). Britta Timm Knudsen gives an example of the remnants of the Jesuit Church of São Miguel das Missões in The Rio Grande do Sul state in Brazil. Today, the ruins can be a site of criticism and contestation of colonialism. At the same time, however, contemporary local Mbyia-Guarani people have begun to cherish the signs that their ancestors left on the stones of the church which they had built. In such a way, the site allows for “pluriverse epistemologies, entangled materialities and communal efforts that avoid the trap of identity politics” and it expresses itself “through hauntings/spectrality – staged or just unveiled – that give rise to activism and responsibility often afforded by affects, moods and atmospheres” (*ibid.*). Re-emergence might lead to gaining visibility and voices for new subjects, sometimes of

transnational scope. In the post-1989 context of Polish heritage, the most known examples of re-emergence can be identified with some cultural production referring to specters of Jews living in Poland before the Holocaust.

As part of the progress of ECHOES, researchers were encouraged to play around with the application of these 4Rs and see to what extent and in which way they can be applied to the individual case studies in practice. In a parallel report, Csilla Ariese has added to the four modalities of heritage practice, four modalities for decolonial processes: reassessing, reflecting, reacting, and reorganizing (Ariese 2019b). Observing contemporary Polish heritage practices which since 1989 have been carried out in the post-dependent context of a state that regained its independence, we propose to introduce a fifth modality, called '**reanimation**,' to denote those practices which keep particular content constantly and persistently alive for fear that traumatic events from the past might be forgotten, relativized or even repeated. Thus, we have observed that many heritage elements are presented or performed in constant and well-established forms or reappear in only seemingly new visual or narrative forms which do not truly change the content of what has been represented. In this context, reanimation often represents victims' perspectives on harm committed by colonizers.

#### From Heritage Modalities to Curatorial Memory Practices

For the purpose of our analysis we have decided to rephrase the 'heritage modalities' to **curatorial memory practices**. This rephrasing has three merits. First, it connects us with basic tenets of memory studies and allows us to draw on their vast reflections on how the past is being addressed, constructed, and reframed in the present for the sake of future social relations. We start with the very basic concept of collective memory by which we mean various layers of historical discourses, narratives, and representations constructed by and circulating in a given society, often emotionally charged and entailing some vision of social order, power relations and visions of change (e.g. Halbwachs 1941; Assmann 1995; Nora 1996). In addition, we refer to those authors who refined the initial Halbwachsian notion of 'collective memory' in terms of processes and practices to avoid reification of collective memory (Olick & Robbins 1998). Second, the term curatorial memory practices helps to place the spotlight on particular agents of collective memory – curators, educators, and other museum professionals – and disentangle their specificity from many other groups who also impact collective memory, such as professional historians, school teachers, journalists, social activists, artists, politicians, priests, etc. All such groups convey certain images and representations of the past and have some capacity to uphold or change them, and they are also often divided within their groups about their vision of the past and connected normative and strategic issues. Third, focusing on the curatorial world as a specific agent of collective memory helps to operationalize the ECHOES modalities in terms of our research questions. In the course of our analysis we have asked what curators do with collective memory by working on its tangible and intangible heritage objectifications. Do they contribute to the repression of certain topics (or work against repression); reframe some patterns of collective memory; remove some elements of it; work towards creative re-emergence of new memory discourses/forms; or simply reanimate well-known memory patterns?

## Methodology and Data Consulted

As was described in detail in the previous report (Bukowiecki 2019), the Museum of Warsaw has recently critically revisited its own mission and strategy, refurbished its main site, reviewed its collections and created a new core exhibition based on the conceptual framework ‘*the things of Warsaw*.’ This has resulted in fundamental changes to the museum’s management, curatorship, programming, as well as to the narratives and values it promotes.

However, for this report, we paid attention not only to the new core exhibition *The Things of Warsaw* situated at the museum’s main site, but also to three divisions of the museum. We discovered that they play an important role in altering and upholding the memory patterns related to the city’s history and were of direct interest to ECHOES due to their contents. They have all recently been undergoing important changes. The refurbished Palmiry Museum<sup>1</sup> is situated in the outskirts of the city in the Kampinos Forest and is connected to a national memorial site commemorating victims of mass executions carried there out by the Nazis during World War II. The Wola Museum of Warsaw<sup>2</sup> was located in the district of the city where the ethnic cleansing of 30,000-60,000 civilians had taken place, killed by Nazi troops in the first days of the Warsaw Uprising (1944). The museum hosted an important temporary exhibition on those murders on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the uprising in 2014. At the moment, a new concept of this division of the Museum of Warsaw is being conceived (interviews MW\_S15, MW\_S23). Finally, the Praga Museum of Warsaw<sup>3</sup> is situated in a working-class district of Warsaw on the right side of the Vistula river. Relating mainly to this social setting, it also conveys representations of the local history of the Russian empire, Nazi period, and multicultural relations of the past – first and foremost Jews of Warsaw – and of today, such as Ukrainian migration into the city.

For our research we relied on several types of sources. Firstly, on a very close analysis of the permanent exhibitions and accompanying materials, such as audio guides, booklets, flyers, and more. Secondly, on published or unpublished materials concerning temporary exhibitions and the day-to-day work of various museum departments (collection, education, PR, etc.). Thirdly, we conducted 25 in-depth interviews with management staff, curators, educators, guides, and public relations and marketing experts working at the museum’s main site and at its branches. We were interested in their professional trajectories, the specificity and content of their current work, as well as in their opinions on and their personal roles in the ways in which the museum changes, and in their explicit views on displaying history in city museums nowadays (see Appendix).

For the purpose of this report, we looked for the most telling examples of curatorial memory practices of repression, removal, reanimation, reframing, and re-emergence. We cross-tabulated them with themes and moments that either fall under the topic of ‘internal colonization’ (by the Russian empire, Nazi Germany, or the Soviet empire), class-minority relations, or global colonial entanglements. Table 1 presents an overview of chosen examples which are discussed in more depth further in this report.

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<sup>1</sup> For the Palmiry Museum website, see: <http://palmiry.muzeumwarszawy.pl/en/>

<sup>2</sup> For the Wola Museum of Warsaw website, see: <http://muzeumwoli.muzeumwarszawy.pl/en/>

<sup>3</sup> For the Praga Museum of Warsaw website, see: <https://muzeumpragi.pl/en/>

**Curatorial Memory Practices of the Museum of Warsaw**

	<b>Repression</b>	<b>Removal</b>	<b>Reanimation</b>	<b>Reframing</b>	<b>Re-emergence</b>
<b>Russian empire</b>	<i>Scale-model of Warsaw in the late 1700s, from 1954</i>		Room of Patriotic Items  Room of Relics	Room of Views of Warsaw: <i>Celebration of the Orthodox Holiday of Theophany</i>  Room of Silverware and Plated Silverware  Room of Warsaw Packaging  Main site, Praga division, and Wola division: cultural events and educational programs highlighting the impact of foreigners on the city's past	Images and remnants of the (demolished) Orthodox cathedral
<b>German expansion and occupation</b>	Themes: – Nazi atrocities – War losses		Room of Relics  Palmiry division		Room of Portraits: <i>Portrait of Ali</i>  Wola division: <i>Reinefarth in Warsaw</i> (temporary exhibition)
<b>Soviet expansion and occupation + communist Poland</b>	Themes: – Stalinist atrocities – The history of the collections	Film about Warsaw's destruction, liberation, and reconstruction  Former permanent exhibition  Former permanent exhibition at the Wola division	Room of Relics	Room of Portraits: <i>Portrait of Bierut</i>	Room of Warsaw Monuments: <i>Miniature of a Dismantled Monument</i>
<b>Early modern self-colonization (class</b>	<i>Scale-model of Warsaw in the late 1700s, from 1954</i>				

<b>divisions and social exclusion)</b>	Social history is neither clearly present, nor excluded				
<b>Polish-Jewish relations</b>	With some exceptions, Polish-Jewish relations are neither clearly present, nor excluded			Room of Silverware and Plated Silverware	Room of Archaeology: <i>Jewish Pots</i>  Praga division: <i>Jewish Prayer Halls</i>
<b>Global colonial entanglements</b>	Uncritical re-use of the historical and colloquial name of the ‘ <i>Under the [Little] Negro</i> ’ house and the sculptural head of a black boy on its façade  Room of Bronzes: <i>An Elephant Figurine</i>  Theme: – Former and current state of the city within the global system				

**Table 1: Overview of case studies. Multiple colonial pasts of Warsaw and curatorial memory practices of the Museum of Warsaw (selected study examples). Examples are from the core exhibition at the main site of the MW unless otherwise specified.**

## Repression: Silent Objects and Silenced Questions

A museum is unable to present all possible stories connected to exhibited objects. What is more, the extent of the collections influences the limits of museum narratives. It is, therefore, sometimes hard to justify which omissions and concealments in a given exhibition are examples of repressive efforts. Moreover, curators would rarely openly admit to the intentional repression of some topics, even if such activities are undertaken. For these reasons, this section of our report must be read as the most speculative one.

The radical decision to develop the new core exhibition at the main site of the Museum of Warsaw based only on original objects from the museum's own collections divided into 21 thematic rooms – and extended by two separate sections: *Warsaw Data* providing statistical data from the city's history and [History of the Old Town Houses](#) referring to the past of the site where the museum is located (see Bukowiecki 2019) – is elusive in terms of repression as a curatorial memory practice. On the one hand, this exhibition much less explicitly contains discursive elements in comparison to historical narrative museums, such as for instance the SHM described in a parallel prepared report (Pozzi 2019b), where the overall curatorial voice is strong and objects are often accompanied by their own narratives (documents, films, witness statements). On the other hand, the lack of a main narrative provides space for multiple stories of particular *things of Warsaw*, and through them to visitor's associations, memories, and projections connected to the city and its pasts. As the panel at the entrance to the exhibition informs:

*We do not tell a single story. We do not develop a single narrative. Proceeding through the Museum's eleven Old Town houses at one's own pace and following one's own path, visitors can be inspired by the objects on display to create their own story of Warsaw.*

Introductory panel, *Things of Warsaw* (2017)

Visitors can choose their path inside the museum, as well as choose how they perceive the city. Particular parts of *The Things of Warsaw*, however, seem to such an extent to be concerned with *the things* that they lose any connection to *Warsaw*. The object label system uses traditional art history categories rather than, for instance, those of social history, cultural anthropology, or urban studies. At the same time, the museum tends to be innovative in its categorization of objects selected for display and in how to describe them in panel texts, so as not to repeat the narratives of other museums, nor of school curricula or popular historiography. What is more, the curatorial team, while referring to the city's pasts in the (modest) textual layer of the core exhibition, intended to go beyond the nationalist-conservative and liberal-progressive narratives of divided Polish collective memory. In short, these mean, respectively, either focusing on the heroism and suffering of Polish victims of various occupying powers, or stressing the complexity of multi-cultural relations in the past with Poles often taking the roles of perpetrators and implicated subjects. In effect, the exhibition says less about Nazi and Stalinist atrocities than Polish historical museums usually do. At the same time, Jewish people, who constituted around one third of Warsaw's population in the late 1800s and in the early 1900s, are neither clearly present in the exhibition, nor intentionally excluded (with the exception of some insights that are analyzed below – see *Reframing* and *Re-emergence*). If it is an example of the repression of heritage at all, repressive efforts are directed not only towards difficult pasts but also against mainstream narrative trends and common visitors' habits (interviews MW\_S1, MW\_S2).

From the ECHOES perspective, among the repressive curatorial practices of the Museum of Warsaw, there are some aspects which might be especially relevant to current global debates on

decolonization and the role of museums as contemporary agents in the production, circulation, and negotiation of knowledge. Even though the name of the museum was changed in 2014 from the Historical Museum of the Capital City of Warsaw to, simply, the Museum of Warsaw, the museum hardly deals “with reflection on the present and future of the city” (MW 2015: 14), as the justification of the name change declared. The core exhibition is immersed in a network of local historical discourses and hardly ever allows for connections between exhibited objects and global history contexts, nor does it raise questions about Warsaw’s global entanglements of today and tomorrow.

One of the strongest examples of such repression in the museum’s activities is the case of the historical and colloquial name of one of the buildings in which the museum is housed: the ‘*Under the [Little] Negro*’ house [Kamienica pod Murzynkiem], named after the sculptural head of a young black man on its façade (see Figure 1). This name is not being changed, nor problematized or fully explained by the museum, as if it was transparently obvious and ethically neutral.

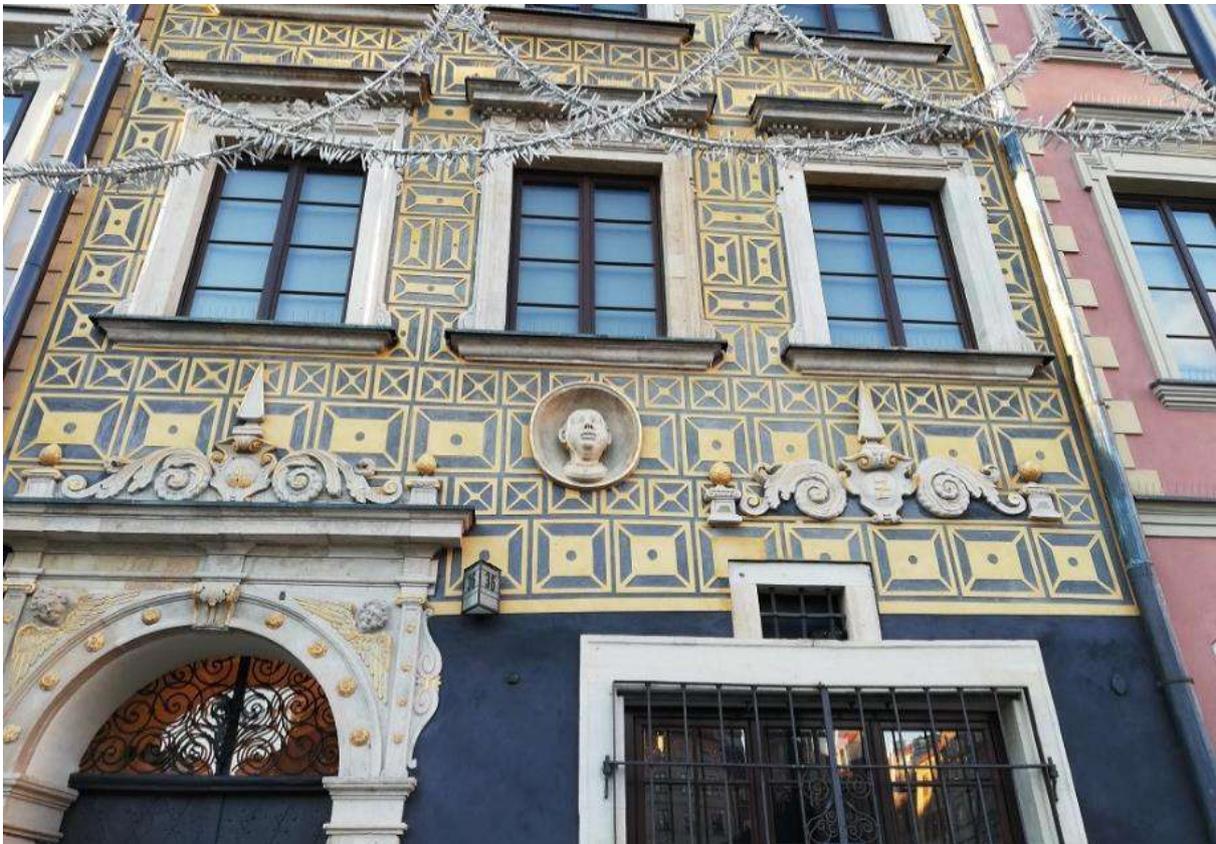


Figure 1: The façade of the ‘*Under the [Little] Negro*’ house with sculptural head of a young black man (see detail), the main site of the Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.

Only some minor explanations of this name, leading to its partial reframing in the historical context of the former rich cultural diversity of Warsaw (see *Reframing*), are present in the part of the core exhibition devoted to the history of the old town houses forming the main site of the museum. We quote from the English version of the description of the house provided in the exhibition:

### **Jakub Działowski and the Negro**



The Negro figure appears in an account of a masquerade carnival parade on the streets of Old Warsaw on 15 February 1580. No information exists to confirm the presence of Africans in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Warsaw. They were probably encountered during business trips by the owner of the burgher house Jakub Działowski [1620-1686], a wine merchant and the mayor of Old Warsaw, who came from the Italian family Gianotti de Castellati. He came into possession of the house after its previous owner, royal woodcarver Jan Klug, had died without an heir. Działowski continued the modifications to the house started by the previous owner. As a result, the sculpture of a head with a black man's facial features appeared on the façade – hence the house's name: Under the Negro. The original sculpture was damaged during the Warsaw Uprising and it is exhibited in the Room of Architectural Details. The head on the façade is a copy created after World War II.

Description, *History of Old Town Houses* section, Museum of Warsaw (2017)

The quote shows the way in which the museum deals with both the name of the house and the sculpture on its façade. They both represent an early-modern colonial imaginary, but are not critically reviewed by the museum, although both the name and the idea of using such motives to decorate buildings may be regarded as offensive nowadays, especially if the museum does not clearly articulate its critical distance to them. A first step against repression in this case could be providing historical context and consistently using quotation marks while referring to the name of the building, as it is recommended in *Words Matter: An Unfinished Guide to Word Choices in the Cultural Sector* (Modest & Lelijveld 2018: 129).

Repression of the colonial involvement of white Poles may also be identified in the way in which a figurine of an elephant from the 1920s-1930s is presented in the Room of Bronzes (see Figure 2). The figurine is accompanied by an audio guide recording, whose narrative is taken from the museum's electronic catalogue,<sup>4</sup> in which the curator of the room tells the story of 19<sup>th</sup> century Oriental imaginary in Warsaw. This story includes the research trips of Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński (1861-1896) – a Polish ethnographer and traveler – to Cameroon in the 1880s and 1890s, his attempts to establish a Polish colony, and the objects which he brought from there to Warsaw. All of these issues are presented in a rather affirmative manner. Although historical examples of the involvement of Warsaw's social actors in the discourses and practices of European overseas colonialism are also depicted in the core exhibition of the Museum of Warsaw in some other thematic rooms (such as the Room of Warsaw Packaging), the museum narrative in general seems to be unaffected by any critical debate on how to deal with the legacies of colonial pasts and it also lacks any reflection on the language used to describe its objects.

Another aspect of repression relates to the practice of the main curator of the *Things of Warsaw* exhibition, who maintained that “the museum does not have to and should not be the place to answer unasked questions” (MW 2015: 133), meaning that the museum should restrain itself from imposing interpretations upon visitors, but rather encourage them to ask their own questions and do further research on their own. As a radical declaration against the pedagogical role of museums, it is problematic for those who seek background knowledge while visiting the museum.

<sup>4</sup> Catalogue entry ‘Elephant Figurine,’ #MHW 29891: <http://ekatalog.muzeumwarszawy.pl/pl/eksponaty/104/>



Figure 2: Figurine of an elephant in the Room of Bronzes (Bracia Łopieńscy 1920s-1930s), Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.



Figure 3: Model of Warsaw in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Museum of Warsaw, 1954. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.

An example illustrating this issue is a scale model of Warsaw in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see Figure 3). The model was made in 1954 and at the moment is the only remnant on display from the previous permanent exhibition. It shows the urban development of Warsaw in the early modern period with large-scale residences with gardens built by nobles and gentry elites around a cramped, medieval bourgeois city center. The spatial structure and demography of the city reflected its role as the capital of Poland – a rural country with some imperial ambitions (especially on its Eastern borderlands) – and the self-colonizing economy based on serfdom and exploitation of the peasants by the gentry, as well as on international grain trade. However, none of these strands is unveiled in the exhibition. The question of how the wealth and prosperity of the city was achieved in the 1700s remains absent not only from the model's description in the audio guide but also from the entire museum. Similarly, the story of the model itself is ignored, so we do not know why the period of the late 1700s was chosen for depiction. Was it a form of iconoclastic exclusion of what happened to Warsaw's architecture between the late 1700s and the 1950s (partitions, Russian influences, world war destructions)? Or was the golden age of Polish enlightenment selected to enable comparisons between an image of the old city and the results of the post-war reconstruction of Warsaw, still ongoing in the 1950s? Such questions seem to have been ignored by the curators as 'unmasked' ones.

Another example of such kind of repression are objects looted in Warsaw by the Nazis and the Soviets, including numerous art works and cultural artefacts. Although the museum narrative highlights the meaning of ordinary things such as those that survived the destruction of the city during the Second World War, the complementary topic of the plunder of Warsaw is mentioned only in the room Warsaw Data. There are no references within *The Things of Warsaw* exhibition to the many 'things' which Warsaw lost. In the ECHOES context, we have been particularly observant of this topic due to possible parallels to histories of art stolen in other colonial contexts and because Poland has been taking action for years to recover its stolen art objects.<sup>5</sup> Recently, issues such as 'German reparations' for war losses and damages have particularly been raised by the ruling Law and Justice party as part of its agenda of politics of history and confrontational cultural diplomacy against Germany. We could not determine whether the Museum of Warsaw does not want to take part in these over-politicized debates, or if there is another reason why histories of stolen objects, including looted MW collections and stolen artworks, are not explained but repressed in the exhibition. Although the MW runs a Heritage Interpretation Centre which presents and teaches about the history of the destruction and reconstruction of the Old Town, its activities might not be known to ordinary visitors of the core exhibition.

Finally, the institutional history of the museum and its collections is also partially repressed in the core exhibition. With only a few exceptions, acquisition histories of displayed objects remain untold.

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<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the official program by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage in Poland, carried out by its Division for Looted Art: <http://lootedart.gov.pl/en/>

## Removal: Decommunization in the Museum and the City

Generally speaking, removal may affect museums in three possible ways. Firstly, museum authorities may decide to abandon some parts of the museum narrative or remove some museum objects from the exhibition, placing them in storage facilities or even deaccessioning them. Secondly, a museum collection may be used as a shelter for objects which were unwelcome elsewhere and therefore were removed. Thirdly, in exhibitions or in educational and cultural programs, a museum may discuss historical events of the removal of structural heritage through visual or model representations.

In the case of the Museum of Warsaw, all three removal practices of difficult heritage are mainly concerned with objects and narratives connected to the socialist period. This is because of the history of the collections and permanent exhibitions of the museum, which were developed predominantly during the era of the Polish People's Republic and included layers of Soviet-type propaganda, which has been unacceptable since 1989 (interview MW\_S23).

An example of the first type of removal happened as part of the refurbishment of two museum sites resulting in the transformation of exhibitions located there: the core exhibition at the main site of the museum (2013-2018) and the permanent exhibition of the Wola Museum of Warsaw (since 2014). In both cases there were several reasons behind curatorial decisions on what to include in and what to exclude from the new versions of the exhibitions and for sure not all of these choices had anything to do with dealing with legacies of difficult pasts of the city. The main goal for preparing the new core exhibition at the main site of the museum was to focus on original museum objects from the museum's collections (see Bukowiecki 2019), while the museum division in the Wola district changed from a presentation of local history to a laboratory for urban processes (MW 2015: 80-81). However, curators also admit that the former exhibitions in these two locations were too immersed in communist ideological presumptions and old-fashioned narrative structures – first and foremost at the levels of the storyboard, textual layer, and visual design – as they had been designed and developed in the 1960s and 1970s, during the period of the Polish People's Republic (interviews MW\_S2, MW\_S23). Therefore, the intentional removal was aimed mainly at the former curatorial voice and the exhibitions' scenography, not the museum objects themselves, because they could contribute to new curatorial choices and voices.

One of the most explicit examples of removal of exhibition content, which is motivated by attitudes to (recent) difficult past, comes from the early 1990s and concerns a fictionalized documentary movie *A jednak Warszawa...* [org. *Varsovie, quand même...*, transl. *Warsaw, anyway...*] from the mid-1950s, directed by French filmmaker Yannick Bellon (1924-2019), which used to be displayed during the communist era as a part of the permanent exhibition. After the political transformation of 1989, however, it was recognized as a manifestation of communist propaganda, misrepresenting the role of the Soviet Army in the liberation of the city (interview MW\_S19). Therefore, it was replaced by another documentary movie *Warszawa nie zapomni* [*Warsaw Will Not Forget*], compiled by Maria Kwiatkowska in 1993 of film chronicles and historical commentary, which presents – as the previous movie did – Warsaw before the Second World War, its wartime destruction, and the first years of the city's rebuilding, but without the concealments and forgeries of its predecessor.

Connections between removal practices in public spaces and museum activities, resulting in the above identified types 2 and 3 of removal practices, are only residual in the case of the Museum of Warsaw. Most monuments of communist heroes dismantled in Warsaw in and after 1989 were

either completely destroyed or were collected by other institutions (Urzykowski 2018). However, a practice of the removal of contested heritage from its original location to the museum may be identified at the MW in the example of a Socialist-realistic portrait of Bolesław Bierut (1892-1956), a Polish communist leader from the Stalinist period. Donated to the Museum in 1964 by the Small Manufacturing Committee, the painting might have been unwelcomed by its owners after the de-Stalinization at the turn of the 1960s (for the reframing of the portrait in the new core exhibition of the MW, see further below).

The third type of removal concerns collecting and putting on display representations of buildings or monuments which were previously removed from public spaces. Their images, models, or even material remnants may support multidirectional discussions on both the role of these monuments or buildings in the past and the reasons of their removal (see *Re-emergence*).

### **Reanimation: Keeping Freeze Frames of Memory Alive**

Reanimation was not among the original ECHOES modalities. However, while doing research at the Museum of Warsaw and its divisions, and by also taking into account the context of other Polish museums and heritage institutions and movements, we identified a curatorial practice which is symptomatic to a discourse of victimhood nationalism that has developed in Poland since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lim 2010). In the ECHOES framework (see Graph 1 above) it can be placed just at the intersection of the axes of the complexity of social imagination (between binary thinking and multiplicity) and of political intensity (between social reproduction and social change).

In the Polish context, reanimation promotes a rather binary thinking (Polish victims vs. external enemies), but without repressive suppression of the enemies nor a desire to forget about the difficult heritage they left behind. It is also intentionally far away from a commodification of such heritage, so typical for the reframing modality, but at the same time its political intensity is not aimed at radical social change (as in the case of re-emergence), but – on the contrary – at **keeping the particular content of social memory constantly and persistently alive for fear that the history might be forgotten and repeated**. This aim is achieved in two different but often complementary ways: firstly, **by using commonly recognized patterns of commemorative practices, heritage management solutions, and narrative structures** (e.g. in historiography, diplomacy, education, and media), which remain effective and appropriate, and, **secondly, by using new forms to communicate and disseminate an essentially unchanged image of difficult pasts**. Within the Polish museum sector, a typical example of the former genre of reanimation is represented by the activities of the State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau at the former Nazi German Concentration and Extermination Camp in Oświęcim (as well as other national memorials of struggles and martyrdom), while the latter type of reanimation is commonly used by curators of historical narrative museums such as the Warsaw Rising Museum.<sup>6</sup>

The main site of the Museum of Warsaw with its *Things of Warsaw* exhibition is generally far from curatorial memory practices based on the reanimation modality, but two out of the 21 thematic rooms of its core exhibition may be analyzed as manifestation of this approach. Both rooms are devoted directly to dissonant heritage of subsequent waves of the internal European colonization of Poland by its neighboring states in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and in both of them

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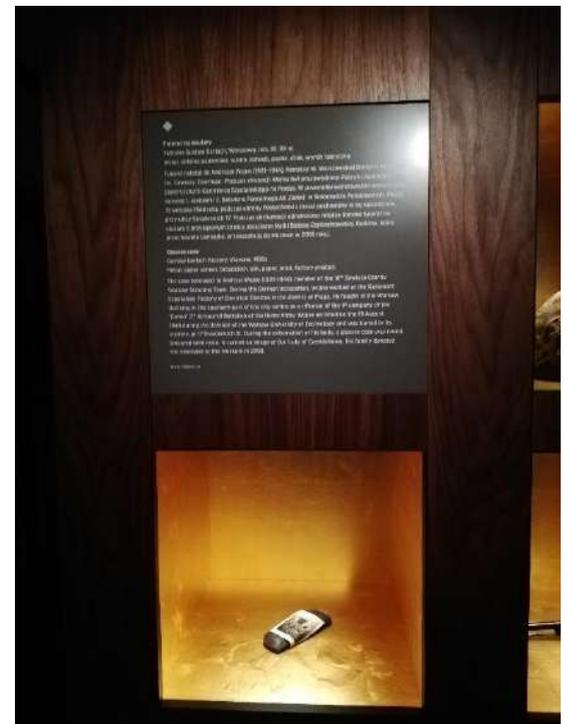
<sup>6</sup> For the Warsaw Rising Museum website, see: <https://www.1944.pl>

the original conceptual framework of the MW's core exhibition is used to present traditional heroic narratives about national struggles with and resistance against foreign domination.

The Room of Patriotic Items, where “small-scale accessories of patriotic character [which] served to keep the memory of the Polish tradition alive” (Trybuś 2017: 126) are presented, is devoted to the period of the partitions of Poland (1795-1918). All museum objects exhibited there are immersed in a well-established Polish national narrative about fighting for independence against neighboring regional powers, first and foremost the Russian Empire. Highly diverse groups of objects gathered in the Room include “memorial medals, plaquettes and badges as well as objects of everyday use: jewelry, watches, tableware, decorative book bindings, cigarette cases and caskets” (Ibid.), which were given to the museum by bequest. As all of them are decorated with Polish national symbols, such as the coat of arms or colors, the common feature of these ‘patriotic items’ – unlike in other rooms of the *Things of Warsaw* – is not their Warsaw-ness, but their “reference to the tradition of insurrections fought for the sake of national liberation, as well as to historic figures; they reminded the Polish people of their lost statehood and were supposed to protect them from the impact of foreign culture and religion” (Ibid.).

In turn, the Room of Relics, understood as “a special kind of material keepsakes of people who are part of the history of Warsaw in various ways” (Ibid.: 135), is the only room of the core exhibition of the museum where every single museum object is accompanied by its individual story (‘biography’): “Each of the keepsakes has an individual history of its making, use, storage and the circumstances in which it entered the museum holdings” (Ibid.). These micro-histories, however, support a traditional narrative about heroes and victims of Polish national struggles against Tsarist Russia, Nazi Germany, and the Soviet Union (see Figure 4). The room consists of around 50 “objects that bore witness to the most dramatic moments in the life of the city and its residents” (Ibid.: 135), of which c. 40 are personal items from the period of the German occupation of Poland during the Second World War, activities of the conspiratorial Polish Underground State, and the Warsaw Uprising 1944.

However, the clearest representation in terms of the reanimation of national victimhood patterns was recently realized by the Palmiry Museum. This branch of the Museum of Warsaw was established already in the socialist era, forming a memorial complex together with a nearby cemetery in commemoration of a killing site from the time of the German occupation. In the surrounding forest, the Nazis carried out mass secret executions of Warsaw Jews and non-Jewish Polish intelligentsia, killing in total c. 1,700 people between 1939 and 1941. The bodies were exhumed and reburied in 1946. Since then, Palmiry has become an important site of Polish collective memory. In education and culture, it has been repetitively evoked as a paradigm of Nazi war crimes, next to concentration and death camps.



**Figure 4: Glasses case with an image of our lady of Częstochowa, 1930s. According to the donors, both objects come from the exhumation of an insurgent of the Warsaw Uprising and were stuck to each other by means of blood. Room of Relics, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.**

The Palmiry Museum was reopened in 2011 with a new building and a new exhibition (see Figure 5). In one large gallery, it tells the story of the murders from the perspective of the victims by exhibiting their personal belongings, such as letters, identification cards, wallets, photos, glasses, pieces of jewelry or clothes. The cases with these objects are centrally located; on the walls are accompanying photos of executions, their dates and places, lists of victims, and their life stories (see Figure 6).



Figure 5: The permanent exhibition of the Palmiry Museum, a division of the Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.



Figure 6: A case with personal objects coming from the exhumation of a victim of mass executions in Palmiry, the permanent exhibition of the Palmiry Museum, a division of the Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Joanna Wawrzyniak, 2019.

In the very center, four living pine trees situated in special glass cylinders were given names which commemorate places of mass executions and remind visitors that trees were often the only witnesses to the crime. A view of the cemetery extends through the large window. On the outside, the modest modern building is covered with metal, pierced to resemble bullet holes. The site is visited by organized school groups, scouts, veterans, but also individual visitors (interview MW\_S21). Playing on emotions and using a modern design and new media, but also working on the documentation of the crimes and the identifications of the victims, the exhibition reanimates the pattern of remembrance of the Second World War in Poland: it both gives back dignity to victims and evokes compassion for them, as well as condemns the perpetrators, however at the same time it says little about the social and psychological mechanisms of both the crimes and the war itself.

### **Reframing: The Lost Warsaw Contact Zone and its Aftermaths**

Reframing as a curatorial memory practice is most appropriate to describe the recent multifaceted process of transformation of the Museum of Warsaw as a whole. The examples of repression, removal, reanimation, and re-emergence mentioned in this report are exceptions as opposed to the scope and scale of reframing.

The museum uses various means of reframing dissonant heritage, depending on which of multiple colonial pasts is being staged and which of the museum's divisions is staging it, as the Praga Museum of Warsaw and the Wola Museum of Warsaw both developed their strategies separately and parallelly to the concept of *The Things of Warsaw* (MW 2014: 26-31 & 54-55). The common ground of these activities is an attempt to change the well-established and commonly used Polonocentric narrative about Warsaw by focusing on the past and present cultural diversity of the city (interviews MW\_S1, MW\_S2, MW\_S7, MW\_S15, MW\_S16). The greatest achievement of the MW in this field was the research project 'Skąd się biorą warszawiacy?' [Where do Varsovians come from?] on migrations to Warsaw between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries comprising of social research, a scientific conference, and an edited volume (Wagner *et al.* 2016), which all together were awarded an annual prize of the Polish museum sector, *i.e.* the Sybilla 2016.

The legacy of the Russian empire, as well as traces of Polish-Jewish relations, and to some extent memories of belonging to the Soviet sphere of influence, are inserted in the framework of cultural diversity and therefore domesticated as a part of local history. The results of such a reframing are ambiguous. As it is aimed against nationalization (Polonization) of the city's historiography, it highlights co-presence and mutual interactions of culturally diverse subjects forming the population of the city in the past, which leads to a de-politization (but still neither an omission nor affirmation) of former social hierarchies and asymmetrical relations between Russians, Poles, and Jews. Although the representation of Warsaw's cultural diversity at the MW is based mainly on national, ethnic, or religious identities, derived from manifestations of religion and language, rather than a social stratification or political domination, the museum narrative broadens the spectrum of social imagination by putting on display issues which are usually repressed or only reanimated one-sidedly in Polish public history. Thus, in contradiction to reanimation practices immersed in a binary thinking to protect the Polish national identity 'from the impact of foreign culture and religion' (see *Reanimation*), the results of reframing processes provide opportunities to notice historical complexities and a hybridity of loyalty or affiliation of individuals and groups in the local context of Warsaw.

Therefore, although the museum does not use this concept, the city of Warsaw may be understood within the reframing mode as a 'contact zone.' According to Mary Louise Pratt it is "the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (Pratt 1992: 6-7). Boaventura de Sousa Santos defines contact zones as "zones in which rival normative ideas, knowledges, power forms, symbolic universes, and agencies meet in usually unequal conditions and resist, reject, assimilate, imitate, translate, and subvert each other, thus giving rise to hybrid cultural constellations in which the inequality of exchanges may be either reinforced or reduced" (de Sousa Santos 2016: 342). The notion of the contact zone, derived from both above mentioned definitions, implies complex, unequal, and ambiguous relationships and influences between a colonized and a colonizer – and such an implication is implicitly promoted by the museum. On the other hand, however, staging colonial legacies at the Museum of Warsaw is intentionally deprived of any subversive potential and as such – except for the examples described in *Re-emergence* – keeps heritage under control and does not tend to transform the museum into a site of identity-remaking. To put it in other words, the contact zone is staged at the MW as it refers to the city's past, but is almost not performed by the museum itself in terms of enabling contact between people of different descent who might meet, clash, or grapple with each other there as staff members, collaborators, consultants, and/or visitors (see Clifford 1997).

To begin with the Praga Museum of Warsaw, its permanent exhibition, opened to the public on 19 September 2015, is divided into 4 main thematic 'zones': *Histories of Praga* (a presentation of the past of the district), *Interpretations of Praga* (contemporary artistic installations commenting on the imaginary of the district), *Testimonies of Praga* (a selection of collected historical documents, and photos and audio recordings from the Oral History Archive), and *Cultures of Praga* which draws attention to former and contemporary cultural diversity of the district (MW 2016: 192-196). The 'heart' of the last zone consists of preserved former Jewish prayer halls (see *Re-emergence*), but the museum – in its exhibition and beyond – also deals with traces and testimonies of Russian influences.

The historical entanglements of Praga with the Russian Empire were stronger than those of the main part of Warsaw located on the left side of the Vistula river, because the collapse of the district in the late 1700s (resulting in the mass killing of civilians by the Russian army during the so-called Praga Massacre 1794) and then its revival in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (industrial and urban development, including Russian settlement) were directly affected by the activities of Russian authorities (interview MW\_S16). Moreover, thanks to relatively little damage to the Praga district during the Second World War and due to its post-war underinvestment, many traces of former cultural diversity were preserved, although most of the Russian population left Warsaw in 1915. The museum also undertakes some activities on recovering the elsewhere repressed Russian heritage thanks to a collaboration with a Russian heritage expert who performs public lectures, museum lessons, and walking seminars on that topic (interviews MW\_S16, MW\_S24).

Questions on the hybrid and complex identity of the city and its inhabitants have also been asked many times at the Wola Museum of Warsaw since the beginning of its still ongoing process of change in 2013, when the museum authorities decided to transform it into a laboratory of the city – an inclusive place for innovative activities dealing with understanding both the current state of the city and its pasts. Therefore, the branch has become more open through its educational

programs and participatory engagement practices conducted for and together with the local community, as well as artistic experiments and international research cooperation.

Among the temporary exhibitions held at the Wola Museum of Warsaw in 2014 there was a presentation of a newly purchased painting by Marcin Zaleski (1796-1877) *Obchody uroczystości święta Jordanu w Warszawie* (*Celebration of the Orthodox Holiday of Theophany in Warsaw*), dated 1836 (see Figure 7).

Zaleski is recognized as the most outstanding Polish painter of cityscapes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The picture, featuring the Eastern Orthodox feast of Jordan (Theophany) celebrated by the Russian governor Ivan Paskevich (1782-1856) among Orthodox clergymen, Russian army officers, and state officials by the Vistula river at the foot of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, had been considered lost for almost 170 years, until it was found and bought in Moscow in 2006 by a Polish private collector (MW 2015: 171). The painting was bought by the museum in 2014 thanks to the financial support of the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. It is in form a hybrid of the record of the event (an Orthodox celebration), a cityscape (the Royal Castle and the Vistula river bank) and to some extent even a portrait (of Ivan Paskevich, see Bochiński 2014), but regarding its content it is a reframing of the imperial reality of 19<sup>th</sup> century Poland subordinated to Russia, as it is a cultural product of the Warsaw contact zone *par excellence*: a Polish renowned painter depicting a Russian governor during the Orthodox celebrations taking place at the foot of the former seat of Polish kings, using an ‘impossible’ perspective from an artificial point of view (Ibid.: 170-171), elevated above the river, which was impossible to achieve in terms of both physical topography and social hierarchies (all civilians, implicitly Poles, depicted on the painting are standing directly on the ice covering the surface of the river, notably below the level of the pier where the main scene takes place).



Figure 7: *Celebration of the Orthodox Holiday of Theophany in Warsaw* by Marcin Zaleski, 1836, Museum of Warsaw.  
Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.

The showing of Zaleski's painting at the Wola Museum of Warsaw in 2014 was probably its first public presentation in Warsaw since 1838. Since 2017, the picture has been on display in the Room of Views of Warsaw in the museum's core exhibition, forming a clear example of reframing of the colonization of Polish territories in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Russian Empire in the manner of the Warsaw contact zone (see Figure 8).



Figure 8: *Celebration of the Orthodox Holiday of Theophany in Warsaw* by Marcin Zaleski, 1836 (second to the left in the top row), in the Room of Views of Warsaw, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.

More links connected to heritage left by the Russian Empire in Warsaw are represented by other museum objects, inserted into different exhibit arrangements in various thematic rooms of the core exhibition at the main site of the MW. The realm in which they are 'packaged' is Warsaw's private sector and entrepreneurial strategies in the circumstances of Russian state supremacy on the one hand, and the Polish national struggle on the other.

In the Room of Warsaw Packaging, among plenty of aesthetically and materially diverse packaging of various goods produced in Warsaw over the recent two centuries, some items testifying to 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish-Russian trade connections are exhibited, such as a candy tin from the Warsaw confectionery factory F. Anczewski, produced before 1914, with bilingual inscriptions in Latin and Cyrillic scripts (see Figure 9). The audio guide narrative indicates this object as one of the most interesting in the room, however the museum does not provide information on whether the design was due to a marketing decision to gain Russian speaking consumers (in Warsaw or elsewhere if candies were traded to other cities of the empire) or whether it was merely due to legal regulations of the Russian state.



Figure 9: A candy tin from the Warsaw confectionery factory F. Anzewski with inscriptions in Russian and Polish (second to the right), in the Room of Warsaw Packaging, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.

Such restraint was avoided in the museum narrative in the audio guide for the Room of Silverware and Plated Silverware (see Figure 10), in which the example of the Warsaw plated silverware company Norblin is used to represent a case of ‘reversed’ Polish-Russian colonization. Namely, opposed to the political domination of the Russian Empire over Polish territories, Warsaw’s industrial and cultural sector was often perceived by non-Polish inhabitants in other provinces of the empire as a window to the West (or the ‘Paris of the East’), providing products of good (European) quality which were made with respect to fine (European) taste (Rolf 2016: 31). Therefore, companies such as Norblin were able to profit from selling their highly valued products to such cities of the Russian Empire as St. Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, Kiev, Charkov, Riga, Vilnius, Minsk, or Tiflis (Tbilisi), benefiting a large imperial area of common customs. As this room’s curator explained:

*In the 1820s, plated silverware companies emerged in Warsaw. They were quick to mushroom – in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century they already formed one of the most important branches of the city’s metal industry [...] The good quality, abundant offer and affordable prices of Warsaw plated silverware not only earned it popularity with local clients, but also allowed it to conquer the high-demand market of the Russian empire.*

Trybuś 2017: 47



Figure 10: The Room of Silverware and Plated Silverware, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.

However, thanks to its composition, the Room of Silverware and Plated Silverware is also the space for a peculiar reframing of Polish-Jewish relations. Among silverware and plated silverware displayed in the room are religious objects such as candlesticks, censers, and Hanukah lamps, but “objects in the Room are arranged according to the workshops and companies that produced them” (Ibid.). Therefore, it becomes clear that there was no simple correlation between the national or religious affiliation of the producers and the destination of their products. Even Hanukah lamps are moved away from the frames of *Judaica* (‘Jewish things’), in which they are often presented in many other Polish museums.

The case of the representation of the socialist past is a bit different. As was already mentioned, many objects and themes dealing with the topic of Soviet influence in Poland after the Second World War were intentionally removed or repressed. Nevertheless, in the core exhibition an official portrait of Bolesław Bierut (1892-1956), who was the main political leader of the Polish People’s Republic during the Stalinist era (1949-1956), has been pulled out of the museum’s storage and highlighted as one of the key objects in the Room of Portraits (see Figure 11).



Figure 11: Portrait of Bolesław Bierut by Mirosław Gawlak, c. 1955 (first to the left), in the Room of Portraits, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2018.

The painting is regarded by both members of the curatorial team and some visitors as the most controversial museum object in the entire core exhibition of the museum (interviews MW\_S1, MW\_S2, MW\_S7, MW\_S19). However, according to the curators who are in support of the idea of including Bierut's portrait in the exhibition, this picture, painted by Michał Gawlak (1906-1971) c. 1955, was selected for display due to the artistic peculiarities of its time (not to be confused with its artistic value) and its references to the history of the post-war reconstruction of Warsaw. It is an example of Socialist realism which "bears testimony to the role of the rebuilding of the capital city in the propaganda of the period" (Trybuś 2017: 58), presenting behind Bierut "a fantastic cityscape" of Warsaw, as "the painter wanted to demonstrate several of Bierut's achievements at a time, which would not be possible, if a realistic panorama was to be rendered" (Ibid.).

Curators of the Room of Portraits also indicate that the picture "is likely the last official portrait in the history of Polish painting that makes a conscious use of the tradition of the images of rulers" (Ibid.), recognizing in the artwork the usage of patterns from Renaissance canons. According to these curatorial intentions, Bierut's portrait is, therefore, nothing more than a reframed museum object, which has lost its political potential and is a curiosity in terms of both art history and the local history of Warsaw. The reception of the object and its display in the room as a key object, however, revealed that these motivations were too sophisticated for some conservative news media who accused the museum of glorifying a communist criminal (see e.g. Przemyski 2018).

## Re-emergence as a Product and as Process

The Museum of Warsaw as a municipal institution established for long-term goals has only a limited possibility to practice heritage by means of artistic, curatorial, or any other experiments supporting political change, particularly in terms of acting on social memory of difficult pasts. Nevertheless, some examples of re-emergence can be identified both as products and processes conducted by the museum.

### *Re-emergence on Display: New Objects, Unusual Arrangements, Proper Descriptions (and Missing Connections)*

In the Room of Portraits, a cubist painting of a naked black man breaks the canon of the surrounding representations of white men from various historical epochs solemnly dressed in uniforms (see Figure 12).<sup>7</sup> The man portrayed was a jazz musician, August Agbola O’Brown (1895-1976, code-named Ali), the son of a Nigerian father and a Polish mother, who had moved to Poland in 1922. He is believed to have been the only black participant in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Having survived the war, O’Brown emigrated to the UK in 1958. His life story was rediscovered several years ago and became immensely popular in traditional and social media in Poland. Among others, Warsaw-based artist, Karol Radziszewski (b. 1980), painted a series called ‘Ali.’



Figure 12: ‘Naked’ portrait of August Agbola O’Brown, code-named Ali, participant of the Warsaw Uprising, by Karol Radziszewski, 2015, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, January 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Curators have continued to break this canon with the small portrait of a female figure, Bronisława Czarnowska (1810-1891), on the same wall. This participant of the anti-Russian November Uprising (1830-31), dressed in the traditional clothes of a woman of her time, is also wearing the order of Virtuti Militari, Poland's highest military decoration for heroism and courage in the face of the enemy.

In several of the representations of O’Brown, Radziszewski connected Polish political symbolism of the Second World War with a consciously applied post-colonial perspective. Ali was instrumental to Radziszewski who could intervene with a minority and migrant narrative into well-established patterns of collective memory of a white and homogenous society (Dubrowska 2017).

In 2015-2016 the Museum of Warsaw commissioned two of Ali’s portraits and put one of them on the display, as the only new acquisition for the Room of Portraits (interview MW\_S2), centrally, among other fighters from the city’s history. Interestingly, recently, on the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising in 2019, O’Brown’s naked portrait was replaced by another one from the series, although the first one is of better artistic value. In the second painting Ali is wearing a uniform, similar to the other men whose portraits hang on the wall (see Figure 13).

This re-dressing of Ali testifies to internal disagreements on the meaning of displaying his portrait. On the one hand, as hinted at by some curators, the ‘naked’ Ali provokes a truly decolonial viewpoint by deconstructing the military roles of the other men in uniforms (interviews MW\_S1, MW\_S2). Contrasts are in play to strengthen this impression: Ali’s nakedness and sexuality against repressed bodies in tight clothes, his blackness against the whiteness of others, the bright white-and-red colors of the Polish flag behind him against the dark or gray backgrounds of other portraits. On the other hand, others saw this setting as a reproduction, rather than a reversal, of colonial and racist images (interviews MW\_S2, MW\_S7). Without a uniform, Ali was stripped of his dignity and therefore his portrait needed to be redressed and re-dressed.

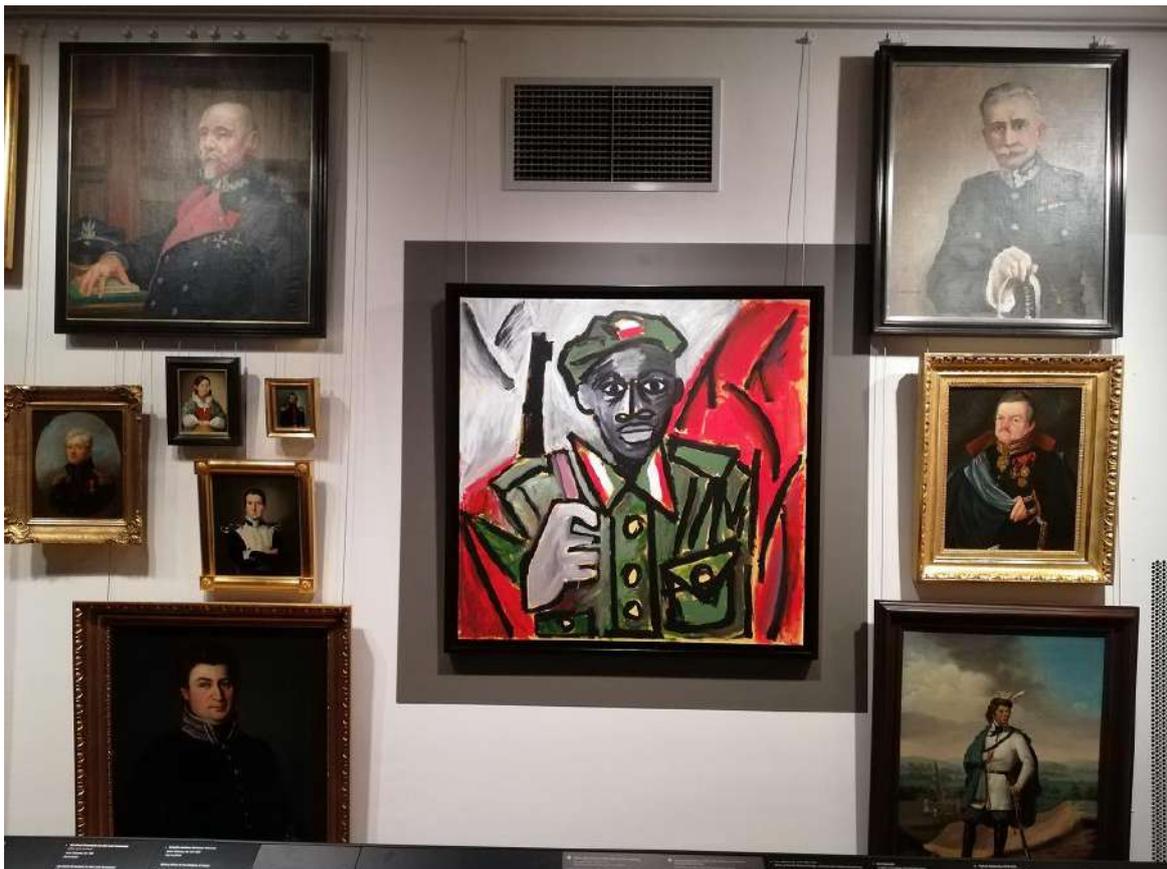


Figure 13: ‘Uniformed’ portrait of August Agbola O’Brown, code-named Ali, participant of the Warsaw Uprising, by Karol Radziszewski, 2015, in the Room of Portraits, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, September 2019.

Ali's portrait is the most interesting case of re-emergence we found in the museum. His forgotten and rediscovered figure re-appears and reconnects the history of the Second World War with colonial history. At the same time, it evokes a pluriversity of interpretations. For many, Ali becomes a symbol of Polish patriotism quite conventionally related to a narrative of national victimhood, albeit widened to accommodate a Polish-Nigerian migrant. For others, his representation in the first painting questions and challenges the military idioms of Polish collective memory. On the whole, the re-emergence of Ali was one of the most successful museum interventions in Warsaw's public space beyond museum itself. Ali's images and stories went viral and since August 2019 (the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising) he has got his own commemorative monolith in the center of Warsaw (see Figure 14). The case of Ali's portraits shows how a thoughtful purchase of a contemporary artwork for the museum's collection could change the way that an exhibition tells stories about difficult pasts of the city, using new perspectives proposed by an artist and supported by museum curators, which all together may support re-emergence of pluriverse epistemologies.



Figure 14: The commemorative monolith of August Agboola Browne (August Agbola O'Brown) in Stefan 'Wiech' Wiechecki Passage, Warsaw. Photo by: Adrian Grycuk, 2019. Image: [https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/August\\_Agbola\\_O%E2%80%99Brown#/media/Plik:Upami%C4%99tnienie\\_August\\_Agbola\\_Browne\\_w\\_Warszawie.jpg](https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Agbola_O%E2%80%99Brown#/media/Plik:Upami%C4%99tnienie_August_Agbola_Browne_w_Warszawie.jpg) (CC BY-SA 3.0 pl).

A similar mechanism of **presenting well-known historical events from new perspectives which allow for recovering hidden entanglements, playing with common sense, and/or rethinking ways of narrating the past** may be used – and often is used – as a rationale for temporary exhibitions in the museum. One of the strongest examples may be the temporary exhibition *Reinefarth in Warsaw: Evidence of Crime*, presented at the Wola Museum of Warsaw from 5 August 2014 to 24 May 2015. The exhibition was dedicated to the Wola Massacre (or Slaughter of Wola), a mass murder of c. 30,000-60,000 civilians living in the Wola district of Warsaw, committed between 5 and 7 August 1944 during the pacification of the Warsaw Uprising by Nazis under the command of SS General Heinz Reinefarth, who was never convicted for his war crimes and after the war became the mayor of the German seaside spa town Westerland on Sylt island. The topic itself is new neither to Polish historiography nor to Warsaw museums, but this time the curators decided to read it as a “great never overcome trauma of Warsaw” (MW 2015: 79, transl. LB) and to focus on the legal aspects of the crime (no one had ever been convicted) and on its spatial aftermaths (the Wola district as a non-site of memory) (interview MW\_S23). The exhibition also had a political dimension, as during its opening on the exact 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the massacre (5 August 2014) the invited current mayor of Sylt, Petra Reiber, apologized for crimes committed during the Warsaw Uprising. A cooperation between the museum and schools in Sylt was also introduced, with an intercultural workshop for Polish and German high school students held in December 2014.

However, in its re-emergence practices the Museum of Warsaw has employed first and foremost unorthodox ways of arranging museum objects in its core exhibition, which break with visitors’ habits and expectations. Dividing museum objects into thematic rooms on the basis of an unobvious categorization, described in detail in the first report on the Museum of Warsaw (Bukowiecki 2019), may, to some extent, prevent a compartmentalization of heritage connected to former imperial powers or occupying forces, leading to its reframing (Knudsen 2019b: 42) or even repression (Kølvraa 2019a: 34). Under these conditions re-emergence happens **at the junction of the categories of the thematic rooms and the individual stories (biographies) of exhibited museum objects**. For instance, objects which relate to the German occupation of Poland (1939-1945) and the Holocaust are found in the Room of Architectural Details (*i.e.* remnants of sculptures found amongst the ruins of the city after its liberation), in the Room of Archaeology (*e.g.* Jewish kitchen wares from the 1940s, excavated in 2013 within the area of the former Warsaw Ghetto, see Figure 15), or in the Room of Warsaw Mermaids (*i.e.* a door handle with an image of mermaid, saved from the fire of the city hall during the Warsaw Uprising 1944). To adapt Roland Barthes’ distinction of *studium* and *punctum* from his reflections on photography (see Barthes 1980), the Jewish pot or the door handle emotionally ‘pierce’ its viewer as the *punctum*, while the context of respectively medieval pottery finds and images of the mermaid – as well as the historical and cultural interests they carry – engage visitors intellectually or aesthetically as the *studium*. Thanks to curatorial efforts aimed at strengthening affective agency, the heritage once removed, repressed, or commodified, returns to haunt the present and to impact the future.



Figure 15: Jewish kitchen wares from the 1940s, excavated in 2013 within the area of the former Warsaw Ghetto, in the Room of Archaeology, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.



Figure 16: Plate with a view of the Saint Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral in Warsaw, Meissen 1915-1916, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.

A way of dealing with the heritage of the Russian Empire in the core exhibition of the Museum of Warsaw which may be regarded as an attempt at re-emergence is the **labelling and describing of museum objects**. The potential of this practice is used only partially, as shown by examples of artistic representations of the Saint Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral from the Saxon Square in Warsaw, which was built by initiative of Russian authorities at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and then was subject to demolition in the 1920s after Poland regained independence.

To start with a model example of the labelling of objects related to the Orthodox Cathedral, in the Room of Souvenirs there is a decorative plate with a group of German soldiers, the cathedral in the background, and the name 'Warschau' (Warsaw in German, see Figure 16). The plate is a souvenir from the time of the German occupation of Warsaw during the First World War (1915-1918). It was made of glazed porcelain painted with cobalt in 1915 or 1916 in Meissen, a German city famous for its porcelain manufactures. The room is accompanied by the following text, which provides a relatively comprehensive explanation:

***Souvenirs from the Period of Russian and German Occupation***

*Numerous views of Warsaw on souvenirs document the periods of Russian and German occupation of the city. Russian rule during the partition period saw the construction of a wide range of buildings to accommodate servicemen and officials, unwelcome by many Varsovians. The toughest blow to Warsaw's morale came with the construction of the Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Saski [Saxon] Square. The Russian authorities conceived the edifice as a symbol of their domination over Polish lands. The temple was demolished after Poland regained independence. A plate with an image of German soldiers against the backdrop of the cathedral is a reminder of the German occupation of Warsaw during World War I. Other German souvenirs include a visiting card tray depicting the blowing up of the Poniatowski Bridge in 1915 and a plate with a windmill, a characteristic element of the landscape of Wola in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

Panel text excerpt, Room of Souvenirs (2017)

The image on the plate shows how complex the urban imaginary could be in the circumstances of multiple colonization: an Orthodox cathedral, a building that only a few years later was removed by Poles as a symbol of recently ended foreign domination, was during the transitional period of WWI perceived by representatives of another occupying forces as a landmark of the city. The peculiarity of the object, recognized by curators (interviews MW\_S2, MW\_S7), is strengthened even more by the fact that since the 1920s the cathedral has no longer existed and has almost completely been forgotten. Hence, a 100-year-old German souvenir of Russified Warsaw becomes a vehicle for the long-term repressed ghosts of a removed piece of structural heritage. The curatorial decision to include this plate in the Room of Souvenirs may be one of the strongest manifestations of decolonized, powerful agency which the museum has taken.

However, in the case of the Orthodox Cathedral, this opportunity has not been fully seized. The point is that even though the museum also showcases other objects related to the cathedral, only an attentive and inquiring visitor might recognize them and connect their stories, because this kind of information is lacking. In the Room of Postcards one can find an image of the cathedral from its glory years (before 1914), the Room of Photography presents photos from 1922 depicting the demolition of its belfry, and a material remnant of the building from after its destruction is also displayed in the Room of Architectural Details. Especially the latter *thing of Warsaw* demands commentary: how do we know it comes from the cathedral? Who collected the remnant and under

which circumstances? How did this object enter the museum's collections? Although objects may have their own agency, they remain silent without their spokespersons.

A clear connection between *The Things of Warsaw* and *The Warsaw Data* exhibitions is also lacking, although an infographic included in the latter could provide important context for all 'cathedral things,' because it presents the transformation in symbolic meaning and the spatial development of the Saxon Square (where the Orthodox cathedral had been located) as one of the most important places of Warsaw, which was also used by other internal European colonizers.

A similar case of **removed and repressed heritage from public spaces, which has enjoyed re-emergence in the museum space**, however originating from another period of subjugation of Poland to the external powers, is to be found in the Room of Warsaw Monuments. Among eleven miniatures of Warsaw monuments there is a miniature of the *Monument to the Fallen in the Service and Defense of the Polish People's Republic* by Bohdan Chmielewski (1927-2014) (see Figure 17). It was one of the last monuments created to glorify communism in Poland and possibly the one with the shortest life. Erected in Warsaw in 1985, it was dismantled in the early 1990s in the wave of the decommunization of the public sphere in Poland after the political and economic transformation of 1989. However, except for a mention in the museum's audio guide, the biography of this *thing of Warsaw* – and all the entanglements it carries – is untold. The potential of re-emergence is therefore, again, unfulfilled due to a lack of information.



Figure 17: Miniature of the Monument to the Fallen in the Service and Defense of the Polish People's Republic by Bohdan Chmielewski, erected in 1985 and dismantled 1990. Miniature: author unknown, 1985, Museum of Warsaw. Photo by: Łukasz Bukowiecki, 2019.

### ***Re-emergence as a Process: Jewish Heritage and the Creation of the Praga Museum of Warsaw***

The opening of the Praga Museum of Warsaw followed a long debate on whether, how, and where a museum dedicated to the local history of the city's right riverbank area should be created (interview MW\_S16). The re-emergence of Jewish heritage also played a role in it. The decision to establish this division of the Museum of Warsaw was made in 2006 and the question on the museum's site was still open then (MW 2015: 60). Members of the Praga-Północ district council insisted on locating the museum at the Konopacki Palace, a neglected and abandoned historical building from the 1860s located at Strzelecka Street. However, city authorities and policy makers, together with the then chief director of the Museum of Warsaw and a Warsaw conservator of historical monuments (the current chief director of the MW) – somehow against voices of the local community – chose a complex of old and neglected tenement houses with a backyard and an outbuilding at Targowa Street 50/52 as the proper place where, after infrastructural renovations, the Praga branch of the city museum was located.

One of the reasons for placing the museum at Targowa Street 50/52 was that this venue comprises of some of the oldest tenement houses of Praga and is in the one of the most important streets of the district, close to one of the most famous old-fashioned market places (Bazar Różyckiego), and is a well-connected location for visitors from both the district and the rest of the city. However, the main reason for the decision, given by the chief director of the museum, was the fact that in 1996 two Warsaw heritage protection activists Janusz Sujecki and Jarosław Zieliński had discovered fragments of painted decorations belonging to former Jewish prayer halls on the walls of the outbuilding (MW 2015: 59). The Jewish prayer halls had been located on the property from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 1940s (Wiśniewska 2014: 246-247). The history of Jews from Warsaw's left riverbank is told much more often and is more visible due to the many commemoration sites related to the history of the Warsaw Ghetto, which had been established by the Nazis during the Second World War. However, the Jewish community in Warsaw's Praga had older traditions of settlement due to legal regulations given by Polish authorities in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and repeated by representatives of the Russian Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Jews constituted up to 40% of Praga's inhabitants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and around 20% in the early 1930s (Kuzko-Zwierz 2014: 253-254; Wiśniewska 2014: 241), but their presence was dramatically broken off during the WW2. Almost all of Praga's Jews were deported by the Nazis, mainly to the Warsaw Ghetto and from there to the death camp in Treblinka, while most of the heritage that they left behind was destroyed, neglected, or repressed – both during and after the war.

As such, the discovered remnants of the Jewish prayer halls at Targowa Street 50/52 constituted a moral obligation. Museum practitioners began their organizational, research, and curatorial work at this place with a strong conviction that the “prayer halls at Targowa 50/52 are an important starting point for a story about culture and faith of Praga Jews” (Wiśniewska 2014: 247; transl. LB). Equally important components of this story are thus both the unique painting decorations (‘culture’) and the fact that they lost their users during the war and were hidden and forgotten for more than 50 years (‘faith’). As the museum took care of these orphaned Jewish prayer halls, it also became responsible for restoring the social memory of their former users and to do so the museum engaged in the re-emergence of heritage of the Jewish community of Praga in the context of a multi-layered history of the city in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The permanent exhibition of the Praga Museum of Warsaw which draws attention to the former and contemporary cultural diversity of the district (see *Reframing*) was opened to the public in 2015. Of course, the museum started its mission in this field a few years earlier, by collecting

objects and oral histories, preparing temporary exhibitions, doing research, and publishing its results to the public. For instance, in 2014 there was a temporary exhibition about sites of former Jewish prayer halls in Praga, presenting 20 contemporary works of architectural photography of places where Jewish prayer halls used to be located (MW 2015: 171). In the same year, an edited volume *Odkrywanie żydowskiej Pragi [Discovering Jewish Praga]*, was released in which museum staff members published articles about dealing with Jewish heritage in their museum activities (Kuzko-Zwierz 2014; Wiśniewska 2014). Among these activities was the creation of the Oral History Archive, whose representatives look for people who spent a part of their lives in Praga and ask them to share their memories. These witnesses of history often describe the urban landscape and daily life in their homes and neighborhood, but they also refer to relations with the former Jewish community. Excerpts from the collections of the Oral History Archive have become a part of the permanent exhibition of the Praga Museum of Warsaw. So have the renovated Jewish prayer halls.

## Conclusions

In this concluding part we would like to sum up some insights following our attempt to test the ECHOES approach on the case of the Museum of Warsaw. First of all, we aim to highlight some potentials stemming from establishing links between the ECHOES heritage approach and collective memory studies. Secondly, we would like to make some suggestions of relevance for practitioners of difficult heritages in Poland. Finally, we pay attention to those instances in which the ECHOES approach might be particularly useful for museum studies analysis in general.

To start with the connections between the heritage modalities and collective memory. As we proposed in the section *From Heritage Modalities to Curatorial Memory Practices*, the ECHOES core categories of repression, removal, reframing, re-emergence (and reanimation which was added by us) may refer to the agency of museum professionals who act upon objects, discourses, narratives, and representations which form tangible and intangible heritage objectifications of collective memory. In other words, we see a museum and its curators as agents capable of maintaining or destabilizing the patterns of collective memory in a given society. Through their museum practices they might contribute to repressing, removing, reanimating, reframing, or re-emerging certain topics.

Our case study reveals various ways in which such curatorial memory practices relate to mainstream collective memories in Poland. Beginning with the **Russian Empire**, its memory in today's Polish society hardly leaves any room for the complexity of the social and cultural relations among the multi-ethnic societies of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which had been subjected to this Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In public history and in school education, various layers of this common history have been forgotten at the expense of a few events and processes commemorated in terms of Polish national victimhood, such as the uprisings of Poles against Russians (in 1794, 1831, and 1864), prosecutions, forced labor, or deportations to Siberia. What distinguishes the approach of the MW from other museums in Poland is, in our opinion, **how the collective memory of the Russian Empire is reframed in the core exhibition, which reminds us of the concept of the contact zone, however only at the level of representation, not at the level of social impact of the museum.** The museum displays objects that testify to the multiplicity of cultural and economic connections (e.g. in the rooms of views, of silverware, and of packaging), even though this is not a central topic of the display. As we have argued, the museum also **shows some**

**potential for re-emergence of this heritage** in how it has dealt with the imagery of the (demolished) Orthodox Cathedral. At the same time, however, we have also observed reanimation of the mainstream national victimhood memory patterns (e.g. in the rooms of patriotic items and of relics).

The period of the **German expansion and Nazi occupation** has been the core orientation point of collective memory in Poland in general. With this in mind, we found issues such as the Holocaust, ethnic cleansings, or looted objects of the city surprisingly absent from the exhibition at the museum's main site. At the same time, however, we knew that one of the main curatorial aims of the exhibition *The Things of Warsaw* was to make it *different* from many other narrative museums in Poland which focus on WWII, such as the Warsaw Rising Museum,<sup>8</sup> the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk,<sup>9</sup> the Schindler Factory Museum<sup>10</sup>, or, in part, the POLIN Museum of Polish Jews<sup>11</sup> (see also Bukowiecki 2019). Moreover, the Museum of Warsaw runs its Heritage Interpretation Center dealing with the history of the destruction and reconstruction of the Warsaw Old Town and one of the Museum of Warsaw's branches, the Palmiry Museum is entirely devoted to the specific history of the WWII killing site at which it is situated. The Palmiry Museum, as we have argued in this report, reanimates existing patterns of collective memory on WWII. **Although we have found some important instances of re-emergence with regard to WWII memory** (including the portrait of Ali and the temporary exhibition on Reinefarth at the Wola Museum of Warsaw), **on the whole, the museum rather contributes to either repressing or reanimating memories of WWII than to their reframing or re-emergence.**

With regard to representations of **Soviet influence in Poland** (1945-1989), we have found all five curatorial memory practices in the Museum of Warsaw. However, besides the case of Bierut's portrait which we interpreted above as reframing, the museum does not force any particular reading of the socialist system which makes it different from many other museum sites in Poland which either condemn or commodify socialism. A removal of political categories and narratives from the socialist period took place already back in the 1990s, long before the opening of *The Things of Warsaw* exhibition (Bogumił et al. 2015). Currently, the *political* aspects of socialist history have been largely absent at both the museum's main site and its branches. Instead, the cultural and social history of socialist modernism in architecture and in industry is told at the Praga Museum of Warsaw rather extensively. To summarize, **the museum in a way normalizes socialism** but at the same time does not give visitors strong tools to use in public discussions about this period which still causes emotions and conflicts in Poland.

As we have shown, **class, religious, and ethnic relations** have been sometimes interpreted in colonial terms in academic literature about Poland, therefore we have looked for representations of these at the Museum of Warsaw. In general, the exhibition *The Things of Warsaw*, with some notable exceptions, does not engage with either class differences or the Jewish history of Warsaw. However, the Praga Museum of Warsaw focuses strongly on both, with an important case of re-emergence exemplified by the Jewish prayer halls.

Finally, we paid attention to **representations of global colonial entanglements in the Museum of Warsaw**. Generally, the museum does not position the history of the city within a global

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<sup>8</sup> For the Warsaw Rising Museum website, see: <https://www.1944.pl>

<sup>9</sup> For the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk website, see: <https://muzeum1939.pl>

<sup>10</sup> For the Schindler Factory Museum website, see: <https://www.muzeumkrakowa.pl/oddzialy/fabryka-schindlera>

<sup>11</sup> For the POLIN Museum of Polish Jews website, see: <https://www.polin.pl/en>

framework, and national categories and stories dominate in descriptions and choice of exhibits. This global framing is absent to such an extent that the museum neither unpacks in any meaningful way the racist historical name of one of its main buildings nor engages with the sculptural representation of a black boy on its façade. In the Room of Bronzes, the narrative of a figurine of an elephant testifies in an affirmative way to the history of a traveler who wanted to establish a Polish colony in Cameroon and was one of founders of Polish ethnography, but it does not in any way challenge the involvement of Central and Eastern Europeans in the colonization of Africa. **These repressed representations of the colonial world** are in a way typical for the mainstream Polish memory culture which does not problematize overseas colonialism from within Central and Eastern Europe, seeing it as an issue of Western/Southern Europeans. In such a way, **the museum's curatorial practices seem to be untouched by the worldwide debate on how to deal with the legacies of Europe's overseas colonialism.**

Our second point concerns two practical conclusions relating both to the above considerations and some general discussions carried out within the ECHOES project. The exhibition *The Things of Warsaw* was a very courageous intervention into the current landscape of Polish history museums. Going against the overwhelmingly common patterns of narrative and scenographic museums, the exhibition underscores that history is about fragments and not about single narratives (Bukowiecki 2019; Trybuś 2017). *The Things of Warsaw* shows the complexity of history encapsulated in materiality by displaying thousands of objects and visitors can make their own sense of them. In this report, it has not been our goal to evaluate whether the curatorial aims were met from the visitors' perspective. However, our own close reading of the exhibition and interviews with curators helped us to notice some issues that might be still reflected upon in further work at this exhibition, as well as more widely in Polish history museums. First, thanks to its object-oriented approach, and only in a few examples, the Museum of Warsaw managed to reveal that working through the history of the Russian Empire could become an important topic for museums in Poland. Second, the museum also testifies to the necessity of more intense exchange between Polish curators and curators around the world on how to deal with overseas colonial heritage in exhibitions in terms of display and narrative. Third, we were generally perplexed by our findings on the incompatibility of theoretical concepts used by museum professionals, historians, and cultural scholars working on the CEE versus those working in other parts of the world. For instance, in our research we have experimented with concepts such as 'internal colonization' to make our research analogous to the research undertaken by other colleagues in ECHOES. Although such categories are well established in some streams of academic literature, to a large extent they have been unknown not only by curators but also by some scholars. We obviously do not claim that curators need to 'buy' every argument or notion from the theoretical literature and we have ourselves been hesitant to overstretch the concept of colonization. Still, there is a lot of potential to work on urban, national, European, and global narratives for historical museum displays in a way that would reconnect the CEE to European and global history and make histories of objects not only complex but also clear from various standpoints. In other words, a more intense transdisciplinary and transnational dialogue seems to be necessary to broaden the scope of future curatorial choices.

Our last point is most general and it relates to the instances wherein the core categories of the ECHOES approach can be useful to museum studies. Beyond the scope of this report, we have found out that they prove to be useful for comparative analyses of museums (e.g. city museums, ethnographic museums) or for comparisons between museums and other agents of collective memory working on similar aspects of the past (e.g. artists and museum curators). In our team of

scholars working on Chinese, Dutch, and Polish museums we often asked each other whether we were dealing with the cases of ‘re-emergence,’ ‘reframing,’ or another heritage modality/curatorial memory practice. However, the ECHOES modalities also helped us to notice that they can enrich existing tools available to curators who can use them to assess their own work in terms of heritage and collective memory: whether they are contributing to the re-emergence of forgotten topics; or to the reframing of current memory patterns; or perhaps they are rather reanimating; or contributing to the removal or repression of certain topics. In other words, the ECHOES modalities can help curators to evaluate their choices of which messages they want to convey to museum visitors.

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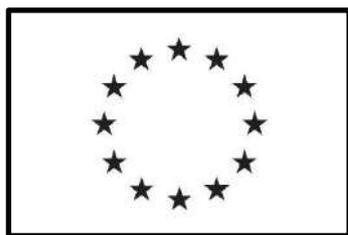
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# ECHOOES

EUROPEAN COLONIAL HERITAGE MODALITIES IN ENTANGLED CITIES

## Karta informacyjna dla uczestników badania



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University of Coimbra



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DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND MUSEOLOGY



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ETNOLOGIA

MUSEU HISTÓRICO  
NACIONAL,  
RIO DE JANEIRO



MUZEUM  
WARSZAWY



AMSTERDAM  
MUSEUM



上海市历史博物馆  
上海革命历史博物馆  
SHANGHAI HISTORY MUSEUM  
SHANGHAI REVOLUTION MUSEUM

MUCEM  
Musée des civilisations  
de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée

Nazwa badania: badanie działalności Muzeum Warszawy w ramach projektu European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities (ECHOES)

Osoby przeprowadzające badanie: dr Joanna Wawrzyniak (wawrzyniakj@is.uw.edu.pl), dr Łukasz Bukowiecki (bukowieckil@is.uw.edu.pl)

Praca stanowi część projektu ECHOES, który jest finansowany z programu badań i innowacji Unii Europejskiej Horyzont2020 na podstawie umowy grantowej nr 770248.

Chcielibyśmy zaprosić Państwa do wzięcia udziału w naszym badaniu. Zanim podejmą Państwo decyzję w tej sprawie, ważne, aby zrozumieli Państwo, dlaczego przeprowadzamy to badanie i co obejmuje Państwa w nim udział. Prosimy o zapoznanie się z niniejszą informacją i jeśli sobie Państwo życzą, przedyskutowanie jej z innymi osobami. Jeśli cokolwiek pozostaje niejasne albo życzyliby sobie Państwo więcej informacji, prosimy o kontakt z nami.

## **Karta informacyjna z dnia:**

10/06/2019

### **Jaki jest cel badania?**

Celem badania jest przeanalizowanie działalności Muzeum Warszawy – w przeszłości i obecnie - pod kątem rozpoznania dobrych praktyk, kluczowych innowacji i zasadniczych wyzwań w działalności muzeum, w szczególności wobec dziedzictwa kolonialnego i imperialnego, co w przypadku Warszawy przekłada się na spojrzenie na przeszłość miasta – szczególnie tę XIX- i XX-wieczną – z perspektywy krytycznych studiów postkolonialnych, postimperialnych i postzależnościowych. Przedmiotem naszego zainteresowania jest zatem z jednej strony dziedzictwo związane z zaborami, okupacją niemiecką i okresem komunizmu w Polsce, z drugiej – stosunki między grupami uprzywilejowanymi a marginalizowanymi w społeczeństwie polskim (chłopi, mniejszości etniczne), polskie ambicje i dyskursy kolonialne, a także powiązania Warszawy z globalną historią kolonialną. Jako przedmiot analiz pod uwagę brane są zarówno ekspozycje (stałe i czasowe), jak i kolekcje oraz oferta edukacyjno-kulturalna Muzeum Warszawy, a także wartości i narracje promowane przez Muzeum.

### **Dlaczego zostałam/zostałem zaproszony?**

Uczestnikami badania są obecni i byli pracownicy i współpracownicy Muzeum Warszawy, którzy mogą przedstawić działalność Muzeum w interesującym nas wykroju problemowym przez pryzmat własnych doświadczeń zawodowych. Przewidujemy przeprowadzenie wywiadów z około 20 osobami.

### **Czy muszę wziąć udział w badaniu?**

Decyzja o tym, czy wziąć udział w badaniu, należy do Państwa. Uczestnictwo w badaniu jest całkowicie dobrowolne. Jeśli zdecyduje się Pani/Pan do wzięcia udziału w badaniu, otrzyma Pani/Pan niniejszą kartę informacyjną wraz z informacją o zachowaniu prywatności, która wyjaśnia jak Państwa dane będą zbierane i wykorzystywane. Zostanie Pani/Pan również poproszony o udzielenie pisemnej zgody na udział w badaniu. Jeśli zdecyduje się Pani/Pan na udział w badaniu, zachowa Pani/Pan prawo do wycofania się z badania w dowolnym momencie bez podawania przyczyny.

### **Na czym polega udział w badaniu?**

Zostanie Pani/Pan poproszony o udzielenie wywiadu osobom przeprowadzającym badanie. Wywiad będzie trwał około 60 minut i za Pani/Pana zgodą będzie nagrywany.

## **Jakie są możliwe korzyści, a jakie ryzyka i niedogodności związane z udziałem w badaniu?**

Badanie przysłuży się wszechstronnemu poznaniu działalności Muzeum Warszawy i poszerzeniu wiedzy na temat dobrych praktyk, kluczowych innowacji i zasadniczych wyzwań w działalności muzeum, w szczególności wobec dziedzictwa kolonialnego i imperialnego. Wyniki badań mogą zostać wykorzystane do rozwoju działalności Muzeum w przyszłości.

Udział w badaniu wymaga zaangażowania ok. 60 minut, nie wymaga natomiast wcześniejszych przygotowań ze strony uczestników badań.

Istnieje ryzyko, że podczas udziału w badaniu udzieli Pani/Pan przez przypadek informacji osobistych albo poufnych albo rozmowę na jakiś temat uzna Pani/Pan za krępującą. Nie chcielibyśmy do tego dopuścić. Nie musi Pani/Pan odpowiadać na pytanie, jeśli uzna Pani/Pan jego temat za zbyt osobisty, objęty tajemnicą służbową albo krępujący.

## **Jakie są moje prawa jako uczestnika badania?**

Udział w badaniu jest dobrowolny. Może Pani/Pan odmówić udziału w badaniu lub wycofać zgodę na udział w badaniu w dowolnym momencie bez podawania przyczyny.

## **Czy za udział w badaniu przewidziane jest wynagrodzenie?**

Za udział w badaniu nie otrzyma Pani/Pan wynagrodzenia. Zebrane dane nie zostaną wykorzystane przez kogokolwiek z zespołu badawczego do celów komercyjnych, dlatego nie przewidujemy również żadnych wynagrodzeń z tytułu udziału w badaniu w przyszłości.

## **Czy to, co powiem podczas badania, pozostanie anonimowe?**

Co do zasady poufność, prywatność i anonimowość będą zachowane podczas zbierania, przechowywania i publikowania materiałów badawczych w ramach projektu. Wszystkie informacje zebrane podczas badania pozostaną całkowicie anonimowe, chyba że wyrazi Pani/Pan zgodę na używanie prawdziwego imienia i nazwiska podczas cytowania Pani/Pana wypowiedzi.

## **Informacja o zachowaniu prywatności**

Będziemy wykorzystywali wiele różnych metod zbierania i udostępniania danych w tym projekcie badawczym. Niniejsza informacja służy poinformowaniu Państwa co do sposobów wykorzystania Państwa wkładu w naszej pracy. Uwzględniają one:

- Wywiady. Przeprowadzamy wywiady z obecnymi i byłymi pracownikami i współpracownikami Muzeum Warszawy, którzy mogą przedstawić działalność Muzeum w interesującym nas wykroju problemowym przez pryzmat własnych doświadczeń zawodowych. Każdy wywiad będzie trwał około 60 minut i za zgodą uczestnika badań będzie nagrywany. Przewidujemy przeprowadzenie około 20 wywiadów, po jednym z każdym uczestnikiem badań.
- Udostępnianie wyników naszych badań. Istnieje wiele metod udostępniania wyników naszych badań z wykorzystaniem danych zebranych podczas wywiadów. W szczególności planujemy przygotowanie raportów badawczych oraz publikacji naukowych i popularnonaukowych. Wszystkie materiały będą udostępnione online na stronie internetowej projektu ECHOES ([www.projectechoes.eu](http://www.projectechoes.eu)).

## Więcej informacji:

Osoba przeprowadzająca badanie: dr Joanna Wawrzyniak  
Adres: Instytut Socjologii UW, ul. Karowa 18, 00-927 Warszawa  
E-mail: [wawrzyniakj@is.uw.edu.pl](mailto:wawrzyniakj@is.uw.edu.pl)

Osoba przeprowadzająca badanie: dr Łukasz Bukowiecki  
Adres: Instytut Socjologii UW, ul. Karowa 18, 00-927 Warszawa  
E-mail: [wawrzyniakj@is.uw.edu.pl](mailto:wawrzyniakj@is.uw.edu.pl)

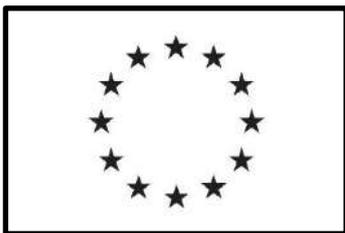
## Gdzie mogę zgłosić obawy dotyczące tego badania?

Jeśli ma Pani/Pan obawy dotyczące tego badania albo sposobu, w jaki jest przeprowadzane, możesz skontaktować się z głównym badaczem projektu: Prof. John Oldfield, University of Hull Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation, Oriel Chambers, 27 High Street, Hull, HU1 1NE, UK; [john.oldfield@hull.ac.uk](mailto:john.oldfield@hull.ac.uk).

# ECHOOES

EUROPEAN COLONIAL HERITAGE MODALITIES IN ENTANGLED CITIES

## Formularz zgody poinformowanego uczestnika



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RIO DE JANEIRO



MUZEUUM  
WARSZAWY



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Nazwa badania: badanie działalności Muzeum Warszawy w ramach projektu European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities

Osoby przeprowadzające badanie: dr Joanna Wawrzyniak (wawrzyniakj@is.uw.edu.pl), dr Łukasz Bukowiecki (bukowieckil@is.uw.edu.pl)

Praca stanowi część projektu ECHOES, który jest finansowany z programu badań i innowacji Unii Europejskiej Horyzont2020 na podstawie umowy grantowej nr 770248.

	TAK	NIE
1. Potwierdzam, że przeczytałam/em kartę informacyjną z dn. 10/06/2019 dla tego badania.		
2. Potwierdzam, że miałam/em możliwość przemyślenia informacji zawartych w karcie informacyjnej oraz zadawania pytań, a udzielone odpowiedzi były satysfakcjonujące.		
3. Rozumiem, że mój udział w badaniu jest dobrowolny i mogę się z niego wycofać w dowolnym momencie bez podawania przyczyny.		
4. Zgadzam się na nagrywanie dźwięku (nagranie audio).		
5. Zgadzam się na cytowanie moich wypowiedzi w raportach badawczych i publikacjach.		
6. Zgadzam się na używanie mojego prawdziwego imienia i nazwiska przy cytowaniu moich wypowiedzi w raportach badawczych i publikacjach (jeśli udzieli nam Pan/i zgody na cytowanie wypowiedzi w sekcji 5, ale nie udzieli zgody na używanie Pani/Pana prawdziwego imienia i nazwiska, cytowane wypowiedzi będą anonimizowane).		
7. Rozumiem, że przedstawiciele projektu mogą mieć wgląd do stosownych zespołów danych zebranych podczas tego badania i moich danych osobowych. Udzielam zgody tym osobom na dostęp do nagrań z moim udziałem oraz dokonywanie ich transkrypcji i tłumaczeń. Rozumiem, że nagrania te ani ich transkrypcje i tłumaczenia nie będą ujawnione ani udostępnione dla kogokolwiek spoza projektu w inny sposób niż opisany w sekcji 5.		
8. Zgadzam się na wzięcie udziału w tym badaniu.		

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Imię i nazwisko  
uczestniczki/uczestnika*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Data*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Podpis*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Imię i nazwisko osoby  
odbierającej zgodę*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Data*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Podpis*

**1 egzemplarz dla uczestniczki/uczestnika; 1 egzemplarz dla osoby przeprowadzającej badanie.**