DECOLONISING PUBLIC SPACES IN THE BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION: A FRAMEWORK FOR REFLECTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP

FEBRUARY 2022

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SUMMARY

In the wake of the worldwide anti-racism manifestations following the death of George Floyd on 20 May 2020, the numerous initiatives to challenge commemorative monuments – set up for many years by associations of people of African descent – and within a broader current framework of reflection on Belgian colonisation and its consequences, the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) authorities decided to mandate a working group to initiate the necessary reflection on the *'symbols in public space related to colonisation and the colonial period'* with the aim of proposing a framework of analysis and action to the BCR authorities.

Following a call for applications, and based on the dossiers addressed to Urban.brussels, a Working Group was formed at the end of 2020 with 16 members from the associations concerned and from the academic world and with four members from the Brussels administrations directly related to public space. The present report of the Working Group on decolonising public space in the Brussels-Capital Region is the outcome of this collective effort.

Belgium-Central Africa, 1876-1962: a history yet to be recognised

The debates on colonial symbols in the public space are inextricably linked to the Congolese presence in Belgium since the colonial period. Belgians of Congolese descent now constitute the majority among Sub-Saharan Africans living in Belgium (about half of whom live in Brussels): there are currently some 80,000, in addition to some 20,000 Belgians of Rwandan descent and 10,000 Belgians of Burundian origin (2017 figures). Given the historical ties between the four countries, these historical migrations are today insufficiently studied, little acknowledged, and mostly absent from (the symbolic markers of) public space and public discourse. The presence of these communities in Belgium is the direct result of Belgium's colonisation in Central Africa which was characterised by violence against the populations of those areas, the appropriation of their natural resources and anti-black racism that persists to this day. However, those established historical facts are still not fully recognised in society. African Belgians experience an indifference of Belgian society to them and to the consequences of Belgian colonisation. They have expressed this by 'damaging' colonial monuments, and in particular those of Leopold II, or carrying out artistic interventions on them aimed at highlighting these colonial symbols in a different context. This demand for historical introspection, made by African Belgians and the associations that represent them, has subsequently gained the support of an ever-growing segment of the rest of Belgian society.

Symbols in public space: from the Belgian 'civilisation mission' to decoloniality and inclusiveness

In Belgium, the creation of colonial monuments and toponymy echoed Belgium's 'civilisation mission' in Congo. Colonisation was part of a larger national project around which Belgian citizens could rally. We can, therefore, describe colonial commemorative signs in public spaces as expressions of a colonial nationalism based on a colonial racist ideology: ideas about the perceived biological and cultural inferiority of Sub-Saharan Africans legitimised the transatlantic slave trade and the colonisation of Central Africa. The persistence of these symbols in the public space without any contextualisation perpetuates systemic racism (structural and systematic discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion), resulting in the exclusion of a large proportion of Belgian citizens.

Today, it is about transforming the existing colonial public space into a decolonial and truly inclusive public space. This process forms part of a decolonial project that seeks to end the social and cultural conditions that perpetuate a hierarchisation between the descendants of colonised persons and descendants of colonisers. This presupposes, first and foremost, an absolute equality among people, regardless of gender, skin colour, age, religion, etc. Decoloniality seeks to give the floor over to (former) colonised individuals and groups with a view to modifying discourses that should be rejected both from a historical and social perspective because of their one-sided colonial perspective and because of their racist basis. In the process, pervasive colonial hierarchies among individuals, groups, and forms of knowledge can be uncovered and corrected. Decoloniality also aims to provide more space for marginalised discourses about the history of the Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian presence in Belgium and about forms of resistance to colonisation.

Remembering and remembrance is a continuous process of never-ending inscription and re-inscription, coding and recoding. The decolonisation of the public space, as part of a decolonisation of society, requires an ongoing social, political and cultural process.

A decolonial public space is not one from which all traces of the colonial past have been removed, but one that is free of material elements that still promote unequal relations between the former white ‘civiliser’ and the former black colonised, and that perpetuate an ideology of racism and inequality among citizens of the same country based on skin colour.

An underestimated diversity amidst colonial symbols and traces

Statues to Leopold II and 'heroes' of Congo Free State, commemorative plaques to local 'colonial pioneers', street names, buildings and works of art in the public space that served as colonial propaganda or are expressions of colonialism, as well as buildings or sites financed with money from colonial exploitation, colonial administration buildings or companies and places that have played a role in the history of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in BCR are also elements that must be given a place in the perspective of the decolonisation of the public space.

Not all colonial traces are equally visible and recognisable by everyone, nor are they all recognised as 'colonial symbols' due to a lack of historical knowledge and/or as a result of the evolution of perceptions.

This broader awareness of visible and less visible traces is important. After all, the decolonisation of the public space is not just about a critical revision of who or what is/remains honoured with commemorative signs or not. It is also about the way we use historical traces as triggers for more complex, multi-voiced decolonial historical discourses, including traces that point to, and tell, stories about the historical presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgium. It is precisely this last group of people whose traces are unmarked today and neither are they recognised by the majority of Belgians.

Identifying and objectifying the problematic aspects of colonial symbols

In order to identify the aspects that can may make these historical traces - and especially the colonial memorials - problematic, the Working Group provides an analytical checklist, with questions to ask and arguments to weigh up. It also applies this to a diverse

selection of colonial memorials and traces, and subsequently makes recommendations for dealing with these 'objects'.

Accordingly, not all colonial symbols are problematic in the same way, nor for the same reasons. Sometimes the problem lies in the person or event commemorated (e.g. the bust of Lieutenant General Emile Storms), other times in the racist images or in the wording, inscriptions and associations evoked (e.g. in the *Monument to the Belgian Pioneers in the Congo*). When objectifying problematic aspects, we should also turn our attention to the materials used in (colonial) monuments and buildings in relation to the colonial extraction economy (copper, tropical wood, etc.) and its funding.

The analysis of these symbols, therefore, is also about building a critical historical awareness of the socio-political context in which initiatives were taken at the time to erect these memorials or to name streets, and about identifying the actors involved historically, as well as the moral and financial support provided. To analyse these symbols is to build awareness of how these colonial memorials and representations are embedded in a colonial propaganda culture that was designed to justify the Belgian presence in Central Africa. Needless to say, the continued promotion of this project has become problematic in our current multicultural society.

What strategies should be deployed to decolonise public space?

To decolonise public space, the Working Group suggests several options when it comes to colonial memorials. It distinguishes between three temporary options focused on social dialogue, interpretation, problematisation and sometimes scenario research, as well as three options for long-term interventions of greater magnitude that aim not to erase, but to transform the memory carriers in the urban landscape.

The Working Group also emphasises the importance of preserving and managing historical traces and relics as documents and urban anchors for a public critical historical memory and for decolonial awareness. That is why the Working Group not necessarily recommends the removal or relocation of all colonial symbols and states that their possible destruction should only be the exception and should be adequately argued. On the other hand, the Working Group underlines the importance of valorising traces that point to, and speak about, the historical presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgium.

To create a more inclusive public space, the Working Group also proposes the erection of new monuments and other symbolic commemorative inscriptions. They allow for today's absent but desirable representations of other (historical) narratives, both in relation to the colonial past and to today's diverse society.

The Working Group is aware that erecting new monuments is much less common today than it was in the 19th and first half of the 20th century. In this respect, it is especially important to avoid the reproduction of stereotypes, both in the selection of persons or themes and in the visual representation in new monuments. Also, art in public space - broader than just as new monuments - can be a critical vector for decolonial transformation, especially when it involves works made by artists of Sub-Saharan African descent.

What is the legal framework for colonial heritage?

Regulations are important, because they establish the framework within which the government protects heritage and thus determines what is considered as heritage, or conversely, what it does not protect as heritage (any more). To date, however, there is no specific legal framework regarding colonial symbols in public spaces. There are, however, several pieces of legislation that address the problems that can arise when dealing with these symbols. This legislation can be useful to guide the process and at the same time forces governments to comply with regulations on heritage protection, land use planning or the change of street names, among others. Furthermore, criminal law limits the ability to act against colonial symbols by penalising 'vandalism' and the destruction of monuments. Finally, difficulties may arise with respect to intellectual property rights that may apply to certain works of art. However, driven by citizens and political leaders, legislation can evolve to remove obstacles raised in the transformation, displacement or removal of colonial symbols.

Specific measures

Finally, the Working Group has made specific recommendations for a selection of memorials and traces in the Brussels-Capital Region, each with one or more targeted intervention scenarios that illustrate the different strategies for decolonising public space. For the equestrian statue of Leopold II at the Place du Trône, for example, we recommend that, initially, either a construction be erected that conceals the statue and that also serves as a support for interpretation on both the Belgian colonial past and the intervention process at this site, or that the statue be lifted from its pedestal and that the pedestal be used for temporary art interventions. Then, as a more permanent solution, we recommend a first scenario in which the sculpture is melted down and the bronze used for creating a memorial that commemorates the victims of colonisation; a second scenario consists in removing the sculpture there and using the vacated place to introduce a new narrative about the colonial past, possibly referring to the traces and remnants in the vicinity of the site.

For the entire Cinquantenaire Park, as an architectural interface between Brussels and Tervuren with its numerous colonial memorials, but also as a site of today's invisible historical narrative of the Congolese in Belgium (cf. the Second Pan-African Congress in 1921), we recommend an overall global thematic redevelopment. This will allow the different heritage objects to be valorised and questioned *in situ*. For the *Monument to the first Belgian pioneers* (also inaugurated in 1921) in the Cinquantenaire Park, we recommend that it be renamed *Monument to the deconstruction of Belgian colonial propaganda* and that it also be deconstructed visually and in terms of content.

For the *Monument to the colonial pioneers of Ixelles*, however, we consider the involvement of the local authorities (municipality) and Ixelles inhabitants to be important. We recommend that the sculptural monument be moved to a museum, in Ixelles if possible, where the stereotyped and racialised representation of the Mangbetu woman can be explained. By way of replacement, we propose a tribute to one or more Congolese women.

Decolonisation in a broad sense

However, the decolonisation of the public space (questioning what is present, while paying attention to what is absent) cannot be done without a general awareness of what colonisation has been and what its consequences are to this day. Therefore, the Working Group also recommends the establishment of 1) a documentation centre/museum in the BCR on the Brussels agglomeration as a (post)colonial city, 2) a memorial to commemorate the victims of colonisation, and 3) a centralised open-air repository for certain memorial objects that would be removed from the public space.

The process of transforming the public space and the social dialogue this requires must be participatory and, above all, inclusive.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALIZATION

1.1. Establishment and mission of the Working Group

The debate on the presence of colonial symbols in public space of the Brussels-Capital Region has become increasingly heated in recent years. In this context, several petitions are launched every year to keep certain personalities out of Brussels' public space. Statues and other references to King Leopold II, for example, are particularly closely watched.

The text of the Brussels government's general policy statement for 2019-2024 states that the government, in consultation with academia and relevant associations, will initiate a reflection on the symbols in public space that refer to Belgium's colonial past (Brussels government 2019: 49).

The Brussels government has taken note of the active initiatives in this debate and also notes the ongoing work in the federal parliament to open the national debate.

The Secretary of State for Urban Development and Heritage intends to respond and analyse what the best possible consensus would be for all Brussels residents. He has therefore instructed the Urban.brussels administration to publish a call for candidates for a Working Group that would look into the issue. Following this call, 16 candidates were selected for the Working Group, to which were added four observers from Brussels administrations with a direct link to public spaces.

On 17 July 2020, the Committee for Territorial Development of the Brussels regional Parliament approved a proposed resolution on the structural and inclusive decolonising of Brussels' public space as part of a work of dialogue and remembrance. Partly through this resolution, the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region wishes to initiate an important reflection on this aspect of Belgian history and of the Brussels-Capital Region. It also wishes to initiate a reflection on the symbols related to colonisation and the colonial period in public space, in consultation with the academic world and relevant associations.

1.2. General background and context

Debates about public space in relation to Belgium's colonisation of Congo are inextricably linked to the Congolese presence in Belgium since the colonial period. In the words of Michael Meeuwis, until the mid-1990s, Congolese did not represent a separate category in the eyes of most white Belgians[1], but simply belonged to the overall category of 'Africans in Belgium' (Meeuwis 1997: 167). This blind spot is shown, for example, by the fact that the history of the Congolese presence in Belgium was almost entirely written by Belgians of Congolese descent. This provides a wealth of information, but there is still a great deal that we do not know because the number of studies on this topic remains

[1] Concerning the use of the term 'white', see *Glossary*.

very limited. To our knowledge, no published research yet exists on Rwandans, Burundians and other Sub-Saharan Africans[2] in Belgium during the colonial period. Nor has there been any systematic research on protests against colonial symbols in Belgian public space during the colonial period. The following summary overview is therefore not exhaustive.

1.2.1. The colonial period: 1885-1958

1.2.1.1. Human zoos

Apart from a few schoolchildren and domestic servants and, as far as we know, a single Congolese person employed by the Congo Free State, the first Congolese to visit Belgium until the end of the 19th century those publicly exhibited at the Belgian pavilion at the World's Fairs in Antwerp in 1885 (12) and 1894 (144) and at the colonial exhibition organised by king Leopold II in 1897 in Tervuren as a counterpart to the World's Fair in Brussels: there, 267 Congolese men, women and children who came straight from Congo, and an unknown number of Congolese boys and girls who were studying in Belgium at the time, were exhibited in separate 'villages'. We know that exhibiting Congolese was subject to criticism in the press in 1894 and 1897.

After the death of 7 Congolese during the 1894 World's Fair in Antwerp and of 7 Congolese during the colonial exhibition in Tervuren, no more Congolese were brought over for the next World's Fairs in Liège (1905, 1930) and Ghent (1913). At a private initiative, however, people from other African countries, Asia and/or North America were shown there.

We have very little information today about the Sub-Saharan Africans who were exhibited in circuses, museums and fairs during the colonial period. As for Brussels, we know that human zoos were organised in the *Panopticum de Maurice Castan* which opened in Place de la Monnaie in 1875. It moved to the *Musée du Nord* in the North Passage in 1888. The current plaque at the entrance to the North Passage does mention the museum, but not the fact that people were exhibited there.

The people exhibited were often examined by physical anthropologists, such as Émile Houzé, professor at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB). In 1887, he stole the corpse of Senegalese Cécile 'Coco' Amadou from the mortuary in Brussels to examine it. Houzé collected human remains, some of which are still part of the ULB's collections.

In 1958, 120 Congolese were exhibited at a separate pavilion at the World's Fair in Brussels. Unlike previous universal exhibitions, the 1958 exhibition set out to show the level of 'civilization' that Congolese had achieved thanks to the Belgian presence.

Congolese students who were studying in Belgium at the time were particularly outraged by the exhibition and by the racist reactions of visitors. A large proportion of the Congolese on display decided to leave the village before the anticipated end. This

[2] Concerning the use of the terms 'Sub-Saharan Africans', 'Africans', 'Afrodescendants', 'persons of African descent', 'Black Africa' etc., see *Glossary*.

exhibition also claimed a human life: Juste Bonaventure Langa was barely 8 months old when he died.

1958 was the last time a World's Fair was organised in Belgium. Later, the government would take no further initiatives to exhibit people. We have no knowledge of human zoos after that in Brussels, but in 2002, for example, Baka from Cameroon were exhibited at the zoo in Yvoir. The presence of the mattresses on which refugees slept during Christoph Büchel's exhibition *From the Collection/Verlust der mitte* at the S.M.A.K. in Ghent in 2017 can also be considered a form of human zoo.

1.2.1.2. A monument to the unknown Congolese soldier

The few Congolese who settled in Belgium before Congolese independence in 1960 were sailors and domestic servants who arrived through the port of Antwerp. Most were not or poorly educated and lived mostly in working-class neighbourhoods in the centre of Brussels and in industrial centres such as Charleroi. During World War I, 31 Congolese and one Belgian who had a Belgian father and Congolese mother fought at the Yser. 11 of them died during the war; among those who did survive, most suffered from health problems later on as a result of the war. In 1919, Congolese veterans of the war founded Belgium's first Congolese association, *L'Union Congolaise*, which had its headquarters in the centre of Brussels. By the end of the 1920s, it had about seventy members. The association aimed to improve the lot of Congolese in Belgium, but also raised the issue of colonial abuses. From the moment the members knew about the inauguration of a monument to the Unknown Soldier in 1922, they pleaded in vain for the establishment of a monument to the Unknown Congolese Soldier.

1.2.2. 1960 – present

1.2.2.1. *Matonge*

The first students from Belgian Congo and Rwanda-Urundi came to Belgium during the colonial period. From 1960 onwards, the profile of the majority of Congolese in Belgium changed from mostly low-educated sailors and domestic servants to mostly students. They were joined from 1962 by students from Rwanda and Burundi and later from other Sub-Saharan countries. Most lived in university towns and returned to their home countries after their studies. An exception were Burundians who settled in Belgium after the genocide in their country in 1972. The great diversity of student associations reflected the great cultural, religious, national and linguistic diversity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

After 1960, the neighbourhood at Porte de Namur grew into a commercial centre and meeting place for Sub-Saharan Africans and Afrodescendants. The neighbourhood had developed from the colonial period onwards in the shadow of the royal palace, which formed the centre of a colonial neighbourhood that stretched as far as Rue de Stassart, where many colonial associations were based. From the 1980s, the neighbourhood was called Matonge, after the most popular nightlife neighbourhood in Kinshasa. During that period, the first Congolese began to settle as asylum seekers. The end of the Cold War that reshaped the geopolitical landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa, the genocides in Burundi (1993) and Rwanda (1994), and the two Congo wars (1997-1998 and 1998-2003) led to a transformation from return migration of students, diplomats and business

people from Sub-Saharan Africa to permanent immigration. Belgians of Congolese descent now make up the majority among Sub-Saharan Africans living in Belgium: there are currently some 80,000 of them. Furthermore, approximately 20,000 Belgians of Rwandan origin and 10,000 Belgians of Burundian origin live in Belgium (Demart et al. 2017: 39).

In 1994, the Elzenhof Community Centre in Ixelles, along with the non-profit organisation CCAEB (*Council of African Communities in Europe and in Belgium)* and Ken Ndiaye, manager of the café-restaurant *L'Horloge du Sud* in Ixelles, organised the first walks in Matonge. This was done at the request of African traders in the neighbourhood who wanted to put the neighbourhood on the map, similar to Rue de Brabant. The initiative went awry because participants did not spend any money at the stores in Matonge. In the following years, several white associations started organising tours of the neighbourhood. These often had a very exotic slant, such that black traders and passers-by (contrary to what most visitors think, hardly any Sub-Saharan Africans live in the area) felt watched like monkeys in a zoo. Initially, black activists wanted to offer walks that provided more accurate information. Over time, they also began to pay attention to the history of the neighbourhood.

During Pascal Smet's term in office as Brussels Secretary of State with responsibility for Mobility in the Simonet II government (2003-2004), the bus stop at Porte de Namur was officially named Matonge. Many Afrodescendants and Sub-Saharan Africans considered it a recognition of the (right to) existence of a Sub-Saharan African neighbourhood in Matonge. This explains why the proposal by the municipality of Ixelles in 2016 to change the name of Matonge to *Quartier des Continents* aroused all the more resistance. The neighbourhood is sandwiched between the European Quarter and Avenue Louise. Many saw in the proposed name an attempt to gentrify the neighbourhood and thereby rid it of its Sub-Saharan African character. In 2017, the new municipal government changed the name of the Ixelles Gallery to Matonge Gallery.

1.2.2.2. The Royal Museum for Central Africa

Starting in the late 1990s, there were protests against the Royal Museum of Central Africa for several reasons: its creation was funded by Leopold II, but the museum covered his reign of terror and the history of the institution with the cloak of love, showing Congo from a distinctly colonial perspective.

In 1997, the Museum organised an exhibition to mark the 100th anniversary of the colonial exhibition that had taken place at the museum site in 1897 at the initiative of Leopold II. In the museum park, the sculpture group *The Congo, I Presume* by Tom Frantzen was erected to honour Leopold II.

The exhibition and sculpture group returned the seven Congolese who died during the World's Fair to memory. The Congolese who took part in the shooting of the film *Boma Tervuren, le voyage* [Boma Tervuren, The Journey] (Francis Dujardin, 1999) asked for a return ceremony to be organised, in which earth from around the tombstones was symbolically buried in the Gombe cemetery in Kinshasa. Later, Sub-Saharan African associations repeatedly paid tribute to the seven Congolese at their graves in front of the church in Tervuren on All Saints' Day.

FIG. 1. Ceremony at the tombs of the seven Congolese who died during their 'exhibition' in 1897 in Tervuren. (Photo: Amélie Umuherezi)

In 2000, Boris Wastiau, an anthropologist at the RMCA, and art historian Toma Muteba Luntumbue organised the *ExitCongoMuseum* exhibition. In the catalogue, the former director *ad interim* of the RMCA distanced himself from the exhibition, which led to a parliamentary debate on the need to renovate the museum. Two museum staff members were officially sanctioned after having placed a red nose on the large statue of Leopold II and the bust of Albert Thys in the memorial hall, on the Leopard Man and the bust of Leopold II that is part of a sculpture group in the park, as part of the exhibition.

1.2.2.3. A turnaround in public opinion

Unlike migrant workers from the Mediterranean, Sub-Saharan African students came on their own initiative (albeit often with scholarships), not on the basis of bilateral agreements between Belgium and their countries of origin. It explains why, for a long time, they were absent from the literature on immigration. The title of a 1994 article by Anne Morelli, *Les Zaïrois de Belgique sont-ils des 'immigrés'?* [Are Zairians in Belgium immigrants?] (she based this largely upon theses written by students of Congolese descent), speaks volumes in this regard. However, the first Congolese immigrants and refugees arrived as early as the 1980s (Schoonvaere, 2010). There are hardly any studies on the immigration history of Rwandans and Burundians and other Sub-Saharan Africans in Belgium.

Unlike for labour migrants, who came to Belgium through bilateral agreements, the country's various governments never developed tailored policies for Sub-Saharan Africans and Afrodescendants who travelled to Belgium individually (Demart *et al.*, 2017). One exception is the 'Resolution on the segregation suffered by children of mixed descent from the period of Belgian colonisation in Africa', which was unanimously

approved by the Chamber of Representatives on 29 March 2018. Sub-Saharan Africans and Afrodescendants also did not figure in public debates about immigration that surfaced in the wake of the electoral victory of the *Vlaams Blok* [Flemish Block] in 1991. That same 'Black Sunday', however, mobilised many Sub-Saharan Africans to unite for the first time since 1919 (see *§1.2.1.2.*) with the goal of combating racism and discrimination, even though at the same time, many still remained strongly committed to the situation in their home countries.

Until 1997, activism in relation to the colonial past that centred on Matonge and the seven graves in Tervuren was limited to black people and it barely received any attention from *mainstream* society. This changed with the translations into French and Dutch of Adam Hochschild's book, *King Leopold II's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* in 1998 and the publication of Ludo De Witte's book *De Moord op Lumumba* (The Assassination of Lumumba, 2001) in 1999. Historian Mathieu Zana Etambala's question of whether this latest book would have caused such a stir if the author had been Congolese or of Congolese descent is pertinent. But thanks to these books, many white Belgians shifted their focus from Belgian Congo as a so-called model colony to a focus on the two violent colonial transition periods: the takeover of Congo by Belgium as a result of the international scandal over Leopold II's reign of terror in Congo and the Congo crisis that followed Congolese independence.

In 2001, the parliamentary Lumumba Commission of Inquiry concluded that the former Belgian government bore moral responsibility for the assassination of the first Congolese Prime Minister and that the late King Baudouin had exceeded his constitutional powers in the matter. In 2003, the two public broadcasters RTBF and VRT showed Pete Bate's BBC documentary *White King, Red Rubber, Black Death*, which caused a stir.

All of this led to a new perspective on colonial history that translated into actions in public space by not only black but also white activists. They initially focused on statues of Leopold II and soldiers under his rule and demanded the creation of a square or street named after Patrice Lumumba. As far as we have been able to check, the first opinion piece that addressed the issue of colonial monuments was published in 2009 in the newspaper *Le Soir* and was written by the *Collectif Mémoires Coloniales* (see *§1.3.1.1.*). Since then, many more opinion pieces have appeared in French and Flemish newspapers; most were written by academics, activists, and/or artists (those categories often intermingle), mostly Sub-Saharan Africans and/or Afrodescendants, whether or not in collaboration with Belgians of other origins. The publication in 2017 of the bilingual book *When we talk about colonisation*, with texts written by Congolese historians, marked an important change in perspective about academic knowledge (Kiangu *et al.*, 2017).

1.2.2.4. Various actors

For a long time, most Sub-Saharan African associations were founded by individuals who came temporarily, usually as students, but eventually settled in Belgium. Starting around 2010, Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent who had grown up in Belgium also began to organise. They are, by and large, concerned with their emancipation within Belgian society and sometimes less involved with their country of origin than their parents. First-generation individuals and their descendants found each other around the issues of the colonial past and its impact on the present, tours of Matonge, protests

against colonial statues and toponymy, and the demand for a square or street named after Patrice Lumumba.

Campaigns by white activists, however, by and large received far more resonance than those that emanated from black activists. Based on the statements of a number of white male activists, one cannot escape the impression that they are also – and not least – driven by the desire to assign themselves a heroic role in contesting and/or dismantling so-called colonial heroes.

Not all the campaigns that white Belgians organise(d) against colonial statues were/are motivated by a sincere concern for the violence and racism to which Congolese fell victim. For example, for Flemish nationalist and far-right parties Leopold II and the soldiers in his service are attractive targets as symbols of the unitary Belgian state. Thus, outspoken racist individuals with some very different interests are joining the decolonial agenda. At the same time, Flemish far-right politicians can also take up the defence of Leopold II, whom they represent as fighting against 'Arab slave traders', out of racism towards Muslims. More recently, white identity organisations strongly aligned with far-right political parties, such as *Schild en Vrienden* [Shield and Friends], have also taken up the defence of Leopold II as an example of yet another white man who they said was being unfairly portrayed in a bad light. Furthermore, colonial monuments can also be the focus of local political strife that has nothing or little to do with colonial history as such (Verbeke, 2011; 2020).

1.2.2.5. Artistic interventions regarding colonial sculptures and buildings in public space

This incomplete overview is largely limited to campaigns in open public space, although there are exceptional references to milestones of indoor artistic interventions.

In 2000, in the play *Bruxelles, ville d'Afrique* [Brussels, African city], Virginie Jortay, Antoine Pickels and Annick de Ville described the historical relations between Belgium and Congo through a walk along colonial monuments in Brussels.

In 2002, as part of the documentary *Tervuren, livre de pierre* [Tervuren, book in stone], about the Royal Museum for Central Africa (with journalist Henry Orfinger), Toma Muteba Luntumbue covered the bust of General Storms on the Square de Meeus and the M*onument to the Belgian pioneers in Congo* in the Parc du Cinquantenaire with a blood red sheet.

In 2007, the *Collectif Manifestement* organised the demonstration *Pour le rattachement de la Belgique au Congo* [For reattaching Belgium to Congo], which started at Place Loix in Saint-Gilles and ended at Matonge in Ixelles. In addition, Emperor Maurice Boyikasse Buafomo I proclaimed 21 January as the J*ournée mondiale de la fête nationale, royale et populaire du Congo rétroactivement unifié* [World day of the national, royal and popular holiday of the retroactively unified Congo].

In 2008, artist Théophile de Giraud doused the equestrian statue of Leopold II in the Place du Trône with red paint.

In 2010, theatre producer Chokri Ben Chickha presented his project *Heldendood voor de beschaving* [A Heroes' Death for Civilisation] in Ghent, with a ceremony around the

colonial monument of Joseph Lippens and Henri De Bruyne in Blankenberge. The performances of *De Waarheidscommissie* [The Truth Commission] by *Action Zoo Humain*, founded by Chokri and Zouzou Ben Chickha, addressed the phenomenon of human zoos in Belgium.

In 2016, the Belgian-Congolese *Collectief Faire-Part* placed a replica of the pedestal of the equestrian statue of Leopold II in the Place de la Bourse during the *Bâtard* Festival. They also presented their documentary *Échangeur* there, about Kinshasa. In the Congolese capital, an exact copy of the equestrian statue stands in the open-air depot of the *Institut des Musées Nationaux du Congo*.

In 2017, for a temporary exhibition at ExtraCity in Antwerp, the Ghanaian artist Ibrahima Mahama created a counter statue to the monument of Father Constant De Deken in Wilrijk.

In 2018, at the request of the association Bamko, artist Rhode Makoumbou created a travelling sculpture of Patrice Lumumba that was displayed in several places in Brussels. During that same year, artist Laura Nsengiyumva created a replica of the equestrian statue of Leopold II in ice that melted to make it clear that there is no longer a place for such a statue in Brussels' public space.

For the reopening of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Freddy Tsimba created a sculpture group placed against a side wall of the museum with reference to the fate of Africans trying to visit Europe and, in what is known as the memorial room, an installation intended to counterbalance the protected plaques with the names of some 1,500 Belgian men (mainly soldiers) who died in Congo between 1876 and 1908. Aimé Mpane created a sculpture for the central roundabout. In 2020, it was expanded into an installation consisting of an additional sculpture, created by Aimé Mpane, and curtains for the historical sculptures in the niches, created by Aimé Mpane and Jean Pierre Müller.

Starting in 2019, the Belgian-Congolese *Collectif Faire-Part* began the project *SOKL*, a series of decolonial artistic actions in the streets of Antwerp around a circular replica of the wooden pedestal of the equestrian statue of Leopold II. In 2019, MuZee in Ostend organised an exhibition on colonial monuments based on photographs by Jan Kempenaers.

In 2020, photographer Oliver Leu published a book that serves as a catalogue of colonial monuments and street names in Belgium.

In 2021, Sandrine Colard curated the exhibition *Congoville*, with mostly work by Sub-Saharan African artists, at the Middelheim Museum in Antwerp located next to the former Colonial University, now the rectorate of the University of Antwerp. In memory of the seven Congolese who died in 1894 during the World's Fair in Antwerp, Dady Mbumba recited a kasala (a Luba ritual poem of praise performed during key moments of life) that same year at Schoonselhof cemetery where they are buried. Also in 2021, artists Roel Kerkhofs and Sam Vanoverschelde erected a replica of the equestrian statue of Leopold II on wheels on Boulevard Léopold II to encourage a discussion about the street name.

1.2.2.6. Official recommendations

The parliamentary commission of inquiry into the Lumumba assassination wrote in its final report: *'The commission is of the opinion that there is an 'unprocessed past' among both the Congolese and the Belgians. (...) Many grievances that neither the academic world nor the political world have clarified continue to fester.'*(Bacquelaine *et al.* 2002: 839, translated by *)

In the years that followed, debates about interculturalism, a concept that took off in the early 2000s, gave consideration to Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent for the first time.

In its final report, the *Commission on Intercultural Dialogue*[3] drew attention to the presence of minorities from Sub-Saharan Africa and expressed concern about the situation of young people from that subcontinent '*who often receive less attention than the Moroccan or Turkish groups. These youths often have a wounded identity'* (Delruelle & Torfs, 2005: 79, translated by *). According to the *Reporting Committee for the Round Tables on Interculturalism*[4], Belgium had to come to terms with its history:

> *'The existence of a large Congolese community living in Belgium is directly related to the colonisation of that country, first by King Leopold II and later by the Belgian state. The ideology that accompanied it, the forms of violence that were used, the appropriation of wealth, and the fact that this part of Belgian history is hardly discussed today feels painful to many people from Sub-Saharan immigrant communities.' (Round Tables on Interculturalism, 2010: 117*, translated by *)

The Reporting Committee recommended that the political authorities recognise this past so that the young generations could grow up in a country that recognised this painful past and was willing to express its responsibility and regret for it. On a symbolic level, the Reporting Committee considered it important to make this recognition visible in the naming of places and public space and to remove names that hurt people from the former colony and mandate areas (*ibid.*: 84-85).

In 2014, King Philippe mentioned the participation of Congolese at a commemoration ceremony for World War I in Nieuwpoort and Ypres.

In 2019, Prime Minister Charles Michel apologised on behalf of the entire government in the Chamber of Representatives to children who were taken away from their mothers during the colonial period in Belgian Congo and Rwanda-Urundi, because of their 'mixed' heritage (usually a white European father and a black African mother) and to the mothers themselves. Chamber members considered erecting a memorial column and a solemn declaration of remembrance. Associations were allowed to suggest locations and texts. During an inter-Cabinet meeting, Ostend and the airport at Zaventem were proposed as possible sites, without clarity on funding. Not all stakeholders agree on this; some primarily want a solution to their administrative and psychological problems.

[3] Commissie voor Interculturele Dialoog (NL)/ Commission du Dialogue Interculturel (FR)

[4] Verslagcomité van de Rondetafels voor de Interculturaliteit (NL) / comité des rapporteurs des Assises de l'Interculturalité (FR)

1.2.2.7. Scientific research

In 2005, the non-profit organisation Avrug, affiliated with Ghent University, launched the website *Contested Colonial Heritage*. It was an initiative by Karel Arnaut (Ghent University) who, along with Bambi Ceuppens (Catholic University of Leuven [KU Leuven]) and Paul Kerstens (KVS [Royal Flemish Theatre], organised the First States-General of Colonial Heritage at the KVS during that same year. Also in 2005, Michael Meeuwis (Ghent University) was the first academic to publish an article on the contestation of colonial monuments in Belgium in the journal of the Association of Belgian Africanists. Meanwhile, articles have been published by other Belgian academics and the American historian Matthew Stanard, who specialises in Belgium's colonial past.

Research shows how Congolese who resided in Belgium became impoverished on average over time. Until the early 1980s, these were mainly diplomats and business people who lived mainly in Ixelles in the 'rich' south. Later, Congolese settled in Brussels City, followed by Schaerbeek and the so-called 'poor crescent' on the northwest and north side of the Region that runs through Anderlecht, Saint-Jean-Molenbeek and Saint-Josse-ten-Noode. A 2010 study confirmed what Congolese had thought they knew for years: that they are the most educated group in Belgium, but also have the highest unemployment rate (Schoonvaere, 2010). A 2017 study that also examined the situation of Belgian Rwandans and Burundians confirmed and generalised previous research findings: Afrodescendants from French-speaking countries combine a very high level of education with a particularly high unemployment rate (Demart *et al.*, 2017). The study also showed a relationship between this situation and the degree to which members of the group studied:

> *'claim commemorative and material reparations concerning colonial history and injustices suffered. The vast majority, this being 91% of respondents, think that colonial history should be taught in schools. 74% of them think that the colonial issue is insufficiently present and/or is covered up in public debate.' (ibid.: 14*, translated by *)*

In 2019, researcher Marte Van Hassel (ULB) organised a cycle of academic and artistic conversations on the creation of new decolonial monuments.

1.2.2.8. International events

The United Nations declared 2011 as the International Year for Persons of African Descent and brought them extra attention on 21 March 2011, the International Day Against Racism. The organization wanted, on the one hand, to point out discrimination experienced by persons of African descent and, on the other, to invite countries to encourage their integration in all areas and to promote better knowledge of and respect for the diversity of their heritage and culture. In Belgium, the *Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism*[5] took the opportunity the International Day Against Racism to take stock of the situation of persons of Sub-Saharan origin in Belgium

[5] Centrum voor Gelijkheid van Kansen en voor Racismebestrijding (NL)/ Centre pour l'Égalité des Chances et la Lutte contre le Racisme (FR)

(*see Chapter 2*). But aside from this, the 2011 International Year of Persons of African Descent passed almost silently in Belgium.

The International Decade for Persons of African Descent (2015-2024) also went almost unnoticed. A text published on the website of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development in 2015 is still online, but Elke Sleurs (N-VA), Secretary of State for Equal Opportunities in the Michel I government (2014-2017) and her successor Zuhal Demir (N-VA) (2017-2018) did not take any initiative. After the fall of the Michel I government in December 2018, Kris Peeters (CD&V), who was given the responsibility for Equal Opportunities, officially launched the Decade in 2019. Nothing further came of this symbolic gesture.

The country's other governments did not mark the Decade in any way. In contrast, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the fundamental rights of persons of African descent in Europe in Strasbourg on 26 March 2019.

In 2014, the debate over Black Pete erupted in the Netherlands. In Belgium, in addition to Zwarte Piet and *Père Fouettard*, other *black face* figures such as the Brussels *Noirauds* and Ath's *Le Sauvage* came into focus.

In 2015, students at the University of Cape Town in South Africa started a campaign against the statue of Cecil Rhodes on the campus. The statue was removed the same year. The successful campaign led to a broader movement to decolonise education throughout South Africa.

In Belgium, the concept of 'decoloniality' (see *Chapter 2*) is applied to guided walks, to demands for the decolonisation of education, libraries, development cooperation, etc.

In 2017, a confrontation between far-right white Americans demonstrating against the removal of the statue of Robert E. Lee, commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the southern Confederate States during the American Civil War (1861-1865), and counter-demonstrators came to a head in Charlottesville in the US South. On that occasion, a demonstrator drove his car into the counter-demonstrators. In the process, a woman was killed and nine other people were seriously injured. This event initially led to a public debate in Flanders about colonial monuments, but attention soon shifted to the six streets (in Alveringem, Kapelle-op-den-Bos, Kortrijk, Lanaken, Puurs and Zoersel) named after Cyriel Verschaeve, a Flemish nationalist priest-poet who collaborated with the German occupiers during World War II.

In 2018, at the request of French President Emmanuel Macron, Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy published a report on the restitution of African cultural heritage in French public collections to the countries of origin. Also in 2018, investigative journalist Michel Bouffioux's articles on the skull of Congolese chief Lusinga strengthened calls for the return of African art acquired during the colonial period. At the reopening of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgian activists (Bamko) demanded the restitution of the museum's collections ('*Not my AfricaMuseum*') and of human remains in Belgian public collections.

The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in the United States in 2020 led to the introduction of *Black Lives Matter Belgium* in protest against this murder, but also against the death of several "immigrants" under suspicious circumstances in Belgium. Opposition to the presence of colonial monuments in public space increased. Princess Maria-

Esmeralda was the first member of the royal family to speak out critically on the subject during an interview with RTBF.

FIG 2. *Black Lives Matter* protest on 7 June 2020 in Brussels. (Photo: © Teddy Mazina)

That same year, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Congolese independence, King Philippe, in a letter to Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi, expressed his '*deepest regret'* for the misdeeds committed during the reign of Leopold II and the colonial period and pointed out that the wounds of the past *'are once again being painfully felt by acts of discrimination, still too present in our society today'* (translated by *).

In this context, the federal Parliament created the 'Special Commission in charge of research on the Congo Free State (1885-1908) and on the Belgian colonial past in Congo (1908-1960), Rwanda and Burundi (1919-1962), its impact and the consequences to be drawn from it'. Also in 2020, King Philippe received Nadia Nsayi, author of *Dochter van de dekolonisatie* (Daughter of decolonisation).

1.2.2.9. Visibility of Congolese, Burundians, Rwandans and Belgian people of Congolese, Burundian and Rwandan descent and events in public space

1.2.2.9.1. *Toponymy*

It is notable that, as far as we know, there is only a single direct reference to Burundi in the Belgian space. This is related to the visit of the Mwami (Rwandan King) Charles Mutara III Rudahigwa and his wife Mwamikasi (Queen) Rosaline Gicanda to Keerbergen in 1955 through the actions of Mayor Julien Peere. The Mwami was awarded the diploma of 'honorary citizen of Keerbergen' by the municipal council and bought land there. Adjacent streets were named Mwami Mutaradreef, Rwandadreef and Burundidreef. Those street names still exist today.

In 2018, the first street in Belgium was named after Patrice Lumumba in Charleroi, followed by the uninhabited Square Patrice Lumumba in the City of Brussels, and before the reopening of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, a memorial plaque was installed in the park to commemorate the 267 Congolese who had been exhibited there in 1897 during the colonial exhibition organised by Leopold II.

In 2020, the Etterbeek municipality began a project to temporarily replace colonial street names with those of women who had resisted Western colonial rule. One of the women in question is Congolese Maman Marie Mwilu Kiawanga, wife of the prophet Simon Kimbangu. During that same year, the City of Leuven decided to name the seven streets on the revamped Hertogen Site after women who have played an important role in healthcare. One of them is Augusta Chiwy, daughter of a Congolese mother and a Belgian veterinarian, who had studied nursing in Leuven and would later care for American soldiers at the Battle of Bastogne during World War II.

1.2.2.9.2. Homage statues, commemorative plaques, plaques and stones

In 1937, a monument to Colonel Louis Napoléon Chaltin and the Corps of Congolese Volunteers he led in Belgium during World War I was inaugurated in Erpent, Namur. Only two Congolese were also part of it: Paul Panda Farnana, who is considered the first Congolese activist in Belgium, and Albert Kudjabo. The monument shows their faces and those of two other Congolese who fought in the Battle of Namur: Bayon Paul Movongo, who had volunteered at the Fort of Namur, and Léon De Cassa, a volunteer in Namur and later a resistance fighter during World War II.

In 1970, at the initiative of Urfracol, a federation of colonial associations, the *Monument to the Troops of African campaigns* was erected in Schaerbeek.

In 2011, after years of effort by Antoine Tshitungu Kongolo, a trilingual commemorative plaque for Paul Panda Farnana was installed on the wall of the Atheneum in Ixelles where he had studied.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda, a commemorative plaque was placed on Place Poelaert in Brussels in 2004 at the initiative of the association Ibuka, with the support of the Federal Public Service for Justice. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the same genocide, a memorial stone was inaugurated in 2019 in Avenue Roger Vandendriessche in Woluwe-Saint-Pierre, and Bruce Clarke applied the fresco *Upright Men* (Les Hommes Debout) on a wall at the intersection of Rue du Meiboom and Rue de l'Ommegang in the City of Brussels, which is part of the PARCOURS Street Art of the City of Brussels.

In 2018, a memorial plaque was inaugurated in Mons for all those who fought for Congolese independence, in particular Patrice Lumumba and his fellow combattants Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, who were murdered together in 1961.

1.2.2.9.3. Artworks by Congolese, Burundian and Rwandan artists or by Belgians of Congolese, Burundian or Rwandan descent in the public outdoor space[6]

The emphasis here is on permanent artworks. Artworks in museums or temporary indoor or outdoor exhibitions are not considered. Nor are exhibitions curated by Africans or Belgians of African origin, book presentations, concerts or film screenings.

In 2001, a fresco by artist Chéri Samba was inaugurated on the Chausée d'Ixelles in Matonge. Guy Forsbach's initiative was carried out by the NGO CEC (*Coopération Edcuation Culture*, then the owner of the original painting, which has since been acquired by the Museum of Ixelles) in collaboration with other partners. The fresco was removed in 2006, but hung on a different façade on the Chaussée d'Ixelles in 2010.

FIG. 3. Reproduction of the fresco *Porte de Namur. Porte de l'Amour* by Chéri Samba at Chaussée d'Ixelles.
(Photo: F. Waltéry © Urban Brussels)

In 2008, the non-profit organisation Africalia donated Freddy Tsimba's sculpture *Au delà de l'espoir* (*Beyond despair)* to the municipality of Ixelles. It was placed on the Chaussée de Wavre in Matonge. In 2017, the Royal Museum for Central Africa organised an exhibition in the shop windows of trade stores in Matonge based on the museum collections for the second time. This second edition included scans of photographs of wall paintings by Congolese artists in major Congolese cities. One of them still hangs on one of the windows of the café-restaurant *L'Horloge du Sud* in Ixelles. The installation that Sammy Baloji made with such photos in the shop windows of a hairdresser shop in the Porte de Namur Gallery in Ixelles is also still on display there.

It is impossible to determine when Congolese, Burundian or Rwandan artists or Belgian artists of Congolese, Burundian or Rwandan origin first applied graffiti or *street art* to public space without official permission and, due to a lack of information, we have not been able to find out when the first graffiti or street art was applied with the permission of the authorities. The only artist on the PARCOURS Street Art website in Brussels who is reported to be from Congo is Novadead (no artists claim to be of Rwandan or Burundian descent). He made his first graffiti in Ghent in 1992, but does not know when and by whom it was removed. The first mural by his hand that is still around is *Bangi Smoker* in Brussels, which dates back to 2017. In 2020, he created the George Floyd mural at the intersection between Avenue de la Reine and Rue des Palais Outre-Ponts

[6] Concerning the use of the terms 'Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgium' and 'Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent', see *Glossary*.

in Laeken. Among his other paintings are *The Future is Europe* in the European Quarter in Brussels and a portrait of Nelson Mandela in Liège.

1.3. An incomplete overview of actions for decolonising public space in Belgium

The following overview is incomplete because no systematic research has been done on this type of action as of now. It largely limits itself to campaigns in public space, although there are exceptional references to indoor milestones and the issuing of the first publications on the topic.

1.3.1. The Brussels-Capital Region

As the capital of the former Belgian colonial empire, Brussels has the largest number of colonial monuments in the entire country. About half of all Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent live in Brussels. This makes Brussels the capital of activism in terms of decolonising public space. It is in Brussels that the first (de)colonial walks were organised in 1999, followed by Antwerp in Flanders in 2018 and Liège in Wallonia in 2020.

1.3.1.1. Actions in the Brussels-Capital Region

1919 *L'Union Congolaise* requested the erection of a monument to the Unknown Congolese Soldier.

1986 Ekanga Shungu published the book *L'Afrique noire à Bruxelles* with a publisher in Brussels in which she referred to Matonge in Ixelles.

1988 After a complaint from the Jordanian and Saudi embassies and the imam of the nearby Grand Mosque, the word ‘Arabs’ referring to slave traders on the *Monument to the Belgian Pioneers in Congo* in the Parc du Cinquantenaire was officially chiseled away.

1992 At the request of *Le Cercle royal des anciens Officiers des Campagnes d'Afrique*, the word ‘Arabs’ referring to slave traders on the *Monument to the Belgian pioneers in Congo* in the Parc du Cinquantenaire were restored again, but they were then erased without being restored again.

1994 The Elzenhof Community Centre in Ixelles, along with the non-profit organisation CCAEB and Ken Ndiaye, manager of the café-restaurant *L'Horloge du Sud* in Ixelles, organised the first walks in Matonge (see *§1.2.2.1*.).

1999 Isabelle Durant, Deputy Prime Minister for Ecolo, decided to rename the Katanga Room in her offices at 63-65 Rue de la Loi the Lumumba Room.

The association *Ba Yaya* began organising colonial walks in Brussels.

2000 The play *Bruxelles, ville d'Afrique*, by Virginie Jortay, Antoine Pickels and Annick de Ville described the historical relations between Belgium and Congo through a walk along colonial monuments in Brussels.

2001 In Matonge in Ixelles, a fresco based on the painting *Porte de Namur: porte de l'amour?* by Congolese painter Chéri Samba was inaugurated.

2002 Lucas Catherine published the book *Bouwen met zwart geld: de grootheidswaanzin van Leopold II* (*Building with black money: Leopold II's megalomania*).

Toma Muteba Luntumbue covered the bust of General Storms on the Square de Meeus and the *Monument to the Belgian Pioneers in Congo* at the Parc du Cinquantenaire with a blood red sheet.

2003-2004 The metro and bus stops at Porte de Namur in Ixelles were renamed 'Matonge'.

2004 A review of the walks organised by the Elzenhof Community Centre in Ixelles showed that they stereotyped and exoticised Africans and Belgian Africans and that there was too little interaction with neighbourhood residents. A working group was formed and interviews were conducted of local residents in preparation for new walks.

Lucas Catherine began to guide colonial walks in Schaerbeek and later in Brussels.

2005 Martin Yandesa Mavuzi compiled an initial list of Brussels street names that refer to Europeans who were active in former Belgian Africa.

Actions were taken against the *Monument to the Belgian Pioneers in Congo* in the Parc du Cinquantenaire, which was being restored.

Francesca Bomboko, Armand Borrey-Kasumbu, Daniel Cattier, Véronique Habran, Valérie Kanza, Olivier Mushiete and Roch Tran campaigned in vain to save the building at Rue Belliard 220, which in 1958 housed the *Centre International*, which accommodated *Présence Africaine*.

Bambi Ceuppens (KU Leuven), Karel Arnaut (Ghent University) and Paul Kerstens (KVS) organised the First States-General of Belgian-Congolese Cultural Heritage at the KVS, which focused on colonial monuments.

2006 Lucas Catherine published his book *Wandelen naar Kongo. Langs koloniaal erfgoed in Brussel en België* (*Walking to the Congo. Along colonial heritage in Brussels and Belgium*).

The fresco in *Matonge in Ixelles*, based on the painting *Porte de Namur: porte de l'amour?* by Congolese painter Chéri Samba, was removed.

Antoine Tshitungu Kongolo began guiding colonial walks in Matonge.

2007 Dieudonné Kabongo and Charlie Degotte performed the short one-act *Tangoya Kot Fourdoum* at the equestrian statue of Leopold II in the city of Brussels.

On the Chaussée de Wavre in Ixelles, the sculpture *Au delà de l'espoir* by Congolese artist Freddy Tsimba was inaugurated.

Nzema Omba, founder of the Bibliothèque Panafrica in Ixelles, first symbolically renamed Place de la Tulipe Place Lumumba and then, together with Philip Buyck, began to work for a Place Lumumba at the Boniface Church in Ixelles.

The Collectif Manifestement organised the demonstration Pour le rattachement de la Belgique au Congo.

2008 Artist Théophile de Giraud doused the equestrian statue of Leopold II in the Place du Trône with red paint.

Riga Square d'Afrique and CADTM (*Comité pour l'Abolition des Dettes Illégitimes* [*Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt*]), in collaboration with Antoine Tshitungu Kongolo, organised a commemoration for the Unknown Congolese Soldier and a tribute to Paul Panda Farnana on 11 November. The ceremony was followed by a memorial walk, led by Lucas Catherine, from Riga Square to Parc Josaphat.

FIG. 4. Poster for the commemoration cermony for the unknown Congolese Soldier on 11 November 2008.

FIG. 5. Poster announcing the colloquium 'Les monuments coloniaux, lieux de mémoire contestés' in 2008. (Archive Lucas Catherine)

Members of CADTM took the initiative in creating the *Collectif Mémoires Coloniales*, which associations such as Congo Forum and individuals such as Karel Arnaut, Bambi Ceuppens and Antoine Tshitungu Kongolo joined. The collective chose to focus initially on colonial heritage in public space by examining statues, monuments, and street names that glorified

colonisation, and to think about the different ways to contest them. The meetings took place at *L'Horloge du Sud* in Ixelles. On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Belgium's takeover of the Congo, the collective organised the colloquium *Les monuments coloniaux, lieux de mémoire contestés* (*Colonial monuments, contested memory spaces*) in Brussels.

2010 The new *Collectif Mémoires Coloniales et Lutte contre les Discriminations* [*Collective Colonial Memories and Struggle against* Discriminations] began to organise colonial walks in Ixelles and Brussels.

FIG. 6. Guided tour in Brussels organised by the new *Collectif Mémoires Coloniales et Lutte contre les Discriminations*. (Photo: CMCLD archive)

The association *Bakushinta* began the annual commemoration for Congolese veterans of World War I at the *Monument to the Troops of the African Campaigns* in Schaerbeek.

2011 A trilingual memorial plaque for former student Paul Panda Farnana was installed on the wall of the Athenaeum in Ixelles.

2013 Antoine Tshitungu Kongolo organised walks with *Unités/Nomades* in the form of radio documentaries called *Les Statues parlent aussi* [*Statues also talk]*).

In preparation for the 100th anniversary of World War I, *Bakushinta* sent a letter to the various Belgian authorities, including King Philippe, asking for recognition of the participation of Congolese. The annual commemoration on November 11 was followed by a conference entitled *'Ces vaillants congolais qui ont changé le cours de l'histoire de la Belgique et du monde!'* (*The brave Congolese who changed the history of Belgium and the world!*) with speakers Anicet Mobe, Odette Kudjabo, Jean-Jacques Wondo and Colonel Kalonga.

2014 The association *Bakushinta* organised a commemoration for the centenary of World War I at the *Monument to the Troops of the African Campaigns* in Schaerbeek.

2015 Activists inaugurated Place Lumumba at Trinity Church in Brussels. The square was indicated on Google Maps.

After the City of Brussels decided to organise a tribute to Leopold II, an event was organised around his equestrian statue on Place du Trône. The statue was smeared, the tribute cancelled.

The association *Ba Yaya* changed its name to Bamko and continued its colonial walks.

The association Bakushinta began to organise colonial walks and commemorated the first two Congolese soldiers who died in 1914 with Mrax at the *Monument to the African Forces of the African Campaigns*.

As part of the *Congolisation* festival, organised by Pitcho Womba Konga, events took place at the Palace of Fine Arts in January, but organisers were not allowed to commemorate Lumumba's death there on 17 January. A silent protest ensued on the steps of the Horta Hall, during which the activists wore T-shirts with an image of Lumumba and taped their mouths shut.

Along with *Bakushinta*, Georgine Dibua organised the exhibition *Présence congolaise en Belgique, plus de cent ans* (*Congolese presence in Belgium, more than a hundred years*), first presented in Schaerbeek and shown in Brussels, Ixelles and Anderlecht in the following years.

2016 The non-profit organisation Labo from Ghent campaigned to change the name of the Leopold II tunnel in Brussels to Patrice Lumumba tunnel.

The proposal to change the name Matonge to Quartier des continents was met with strong resistance. The association *Fédération des Congolais de Bruxelles* launched the petition *Matonge est et restera Matonge* and organised a demonstration in the municipality. Along with other partners, it provided support to commercial businesses in Matonge to help them cope with political and administrative pressures.

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Tabora, the municipality of Saint-Gilles and the Université Saint Louis organised a colloquium and published the book *La guerre 14-18 en Afrique, des mémoires repliées* (*The 14-18 war in Africa, folded memories*), edited by Nathalie Tousignant, Enika Ngongo and Pierre Dejemeppe.

As part of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Tabora, the association *Bakushinta* launched an informational campaign on Rue de Tabora.

2018 The equestrian statue of Leopold II on Place du Trône in Brussels was ~~vandalised~~ twice. [7]

Articles by investigative journalist Michel Bouffioux about the skull of Congolese chief Lusinga, kept at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, led to campaigns against the statue on Square de Meeus of Émile Storms, who was responsible for the murder of Lusinga and who had brought his skull to Belgium.

Inter-Environnement Bruxelles's magazine *Bruxelles en mouvement* published the theme issue *Bruxelles Ville Congolaise*.

A campaign group calling itself *Association citoyenne pour un espace public décolonial* removed the bust of Leopold II in the Parc Duden in Forest and replaced it with a replica in birdseed, accompanied by the text *Congo Free State & Congo Horrors – Explanatory text = necessary*. Later, the statue was removed again and replaced with a statue of Nelson Mandela.

Unknown persons ~~vandalised~~ the bust of Leopold II in Auderghem.

At the request of the association *Bamko*, artist Rhode Makoumbou created a travelling sculpture of Patrice Lumumba that was displayed in several places in Brussels.

FIG. 7. Travelling sculpture of Patrice Lumumba.
(Photo: Rhode Makoumbou)

Artist Laura Nsengiyumva created a replica of the equestrian statue of Leopold II in Brussels in ice that melted. The meltdown took place during the *Nuits Blanches*.

To mark the end of the centenary of World War I, *Bakushinta* organised the exhibition *Les Oubliés des Guerres* (*The Forgotten Wars*) in Brussels. As part of the exhibition, which was also to be on display in Anderlecht later, *Bakushinta* organised various activities.

2019 Lucas Catherine published *Het dekoloniseringsparcours. Wandelen langs Kongolees erfgoed in Brussel* (*The Decolonisation Trail. Walking along Congolese heritage in Brussels*).

The ULB hosted a colloquium on human remains in universities.

[7] For the use of the term "~~vandalism~~", see *Glossary*.

The Royal Museums of Art and History's decision to display via social media a photo of the equestrian statue of Leopold II with the only comment being *Another Royal Birthday* provoked protest.

2020

Vlaams Belang ('Flemish Interest') senator Bob De Brabandere and Dries Van Langenhove, member of the Vlaams Belang parliamentary group, put the word 'Arabs' back on the *Monument to the Belgian pioneers in Congo* in the Parc du Cinquantenaire.

Mirko Popovitch began a campaign to erect a statue in Watermael-Boitsfort for the actor Dieudonné Kabongo, who had lived there for many years.

The statue of Émile Storms was covered in red paint.

The bust of King Baudouin in front of the Cathedral of St. Michael and St. Gudula in Brussels was covered in red paint.

A statue of Leopold II on Rue de Belle-Vue was *tagged*.

The equestrian statue of Leopold II on Place du Trône in Brussels was ~~vandalised~~.

The bust of Leopold II in Auderghem was taken off its pedestal and smeared with red paint.

84,395 people signed a petition to remove all the statues of Leopold II in Brussels.

Tens of thousands of people took part in the *Black Lives Matter* demonstration in Brussels.

Neighbourhood residents launched a petition for removal of the statue *Runaway black slaves are attacked by dogs* on Avenue Louise in Ixelles.

Alexandra David and Thierry Brunfaut organised an initial Round Table with artists living in Belgium, including Aimé Mpane, Hadassa Ngamba and Nganji Mutiri, on colonial monuments.

2021

The statue of Émile Storms was covered in red paint and cleaned.

The *Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Luttes contre les Discriminations* and *ULB Coopération* offered immersive decolonial visits to the ULB via podcast.

Artists Roel Kerkhofs and Sam Vanoverschelde erected a replica of the equestrian statue of Leopold II on wheels on Avenue Léopold II at Place du Trône in Brussels to encourage a discussion about the street name.

The plaque in the Parc du Cinquantenaire signifying the connection between the dynasty and Congo was daubed with red paint.

The Brussels Times published a theme issue of their magazine *Why Leopold must fall*, with contributions from Princess Marie-Esmeralda, Mireille Tsheusi-Robert (Bamko) and Pascal Smet, Secretary of State for Town Planning and Heritage, among others.

1.3.1.2. Decisions by municipal administrations in the Brussels-Capital Region

2017 The Municipal Council of Anderlecht adopted a motion on the creation of a working group for the contextualisation of colonial tributes in public space and the Town Hall: the installation of information boards at Rue Sergent De Bruyne, Avenue de Saïo, Square des vétérans coloniaux, Rue du Transvaal, the STIB stop Vétérans coloniaux and a memorial stone in a room of the Town Hall. Furthermore, new streets will be named to pay tribute to women who participated in the independence of their countries and various awareness-raising activities and moments of reflection and debate (conferences, exhibitions, meetings and debate, etc.) will be organised.

The municipality of Ixelles renamed the Ixelles Gallery Matonge Gallery.

2018 The municipality of Anderlecht placed an information board by the name of the Square des vétérans coloniaux.

The City of Brussels installed 17 explanatory street name signs as part of the commemoration of the end of World War I. One of these memorial plaques is located on Rue de Tabora (22 May 2018).

Inauguration of the Square Patrice Lumumba in Brussels.

2020 The Anderlecht Municipal Council developed a policy on colonial street names, with the International Relations Department, other municipal departments and the associations *Bakushinta*, *Change* and the *Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Lutte contre les Discriminations* conducting historical research.

The Patrimony Department of the Municipality of Ixelles made an initial inventory of streets and monuments related to colonial history, particularly in the Congo, and identified 4 monuments/statues and 11 street names. It decided to move the statue of General Storms on the Square de Meeus.

Etterbeek's municipal council created a mixed and participatory commission to give residents the chance to decide whether colonial heritage would be preserved, contextualised or removed. It is to consist of ten elected officials representing the political groups from the Municipal Council, twenty residents over the age of 16 who were drawn by lot and some people from academia, culture and/or government who will ensure that the work of the commission is also scientific in nature. Furthermore, it may also seek the opinions of associations and individuals recognised for their knowledge of the colonial past. The municipality has also temporarily renamed streets that refer to the colonial past in the most

general sense to dedicate them to illustrious women. This initiative is supported by the municipality's Gender Equality & Diversity and Public Space departments.

Following debates about the presence of the busts of Leopold II and former mayor Roger Nols in the Town Hall, Schaerbeek Municipal Council decided to create a working group on decolonising public space.

The municipal council of Auderghem adopted a motion calling for the installation of historical and educational memorial plaques next to statues of public figures and commemorative plaques, especially in the context of the memory of the Belgian colonial period.

Prime Minister Sophie Wilmès inaugurated a commemorative stone for Congolese independence at the entrance hall of Ixelles Town Hall.

2021 At the initiative of the parties of the municipal majority, the Municipal Council of Forest adopted a municipal motion concerning colonial memories and the battle against discrimination. Once it has an inventory, it aims to work with citizens through a participatory approach (e.g. a citizens' debate) to raise their awareness of colonial recollection and the battle against discrimination. That debate is to be organised such that citizens can reflect, exchange views and make proposals about the most appropriate way to contextualise colonial symbols in public space. At the current stage, it mainly involves the College of Mayor and Aldermen, the administration and external reference organisations (the *Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Lutte contre les Discriminations*, CNCD-11.11.11 and other associations concerned with colonial memories). The College of Mayor and Aldermen aims to contribute to this reflection by (i) analysing what is happening at the federal and regional levels, (ii) highlighting colonial resistance fighters and (iii) as the work progresses sufficiently, suggesting to the youth of Forest that they work on colonial recollections in a broader framework of the battle against discrimination.

The City of Brussels named a street after the murdered sex worker of Nigerian origin, Eunice Osayande.

1.3.1.3. The Brussels Parliament

2020 Establishment of the Working Group on the Presence of Colonial Symbols in Public Space.

Innoviris Co-Create funded the start-up phase of IREP: *Inclusion et représentation dans l'espace public; une histoire de co-création interculturelle* project by GERME (ULB) in collaboration with *Collectif Mémoire coloniale et lutte contre les discriminations*, the Centre bruxellois d'Action interculturelle and Etterbeek Municipal Council. The project starts from the question of how inclusive and democratic public space are in their presentation of colonial history.

2021 Organisation of a panel on public space and mobility as part of the *Assises de lutte contre le racisme*, focusing on the decolonisation of public space.

After a referendum among Brussels residents, the Leopold II tunnel was renamed the Annie Cordy tunnel. The choice of the recently deceased cabaret performer raised controversy when it was revealed that some of her songs contained problematic stereotypes.

Nonetheless, the Brussels Government expressed its desire to rename Avenue Léopold II as Avenue Anny Cordy.

Following the start-up face in 2020, *Innoviris Co-Create* funded IREP (*Inclusion et représentation dans l'espace public*) for 18 months.

1.3.1.4. The federal level

2020 The federal parliament created the Special Commission in charge of research on the Congo Free State (1885-1908) and on the Belgian colonial past in Congo (1908-1960), Rwanda and Burundi (1919-1962), its impact and the consequences to be drawn from it.

2030 As part of the 200th anniversary of Belgian independence, the site of the Parc du Cinquantenaire will be renovated.

1.3.2. Flanders

As far as we know, already during the colonial period a monument was removed from a public space and a colonial toponym was changed in Flanders for the first time, without these decisions being motivated by a fundamental criticism of the activities of the individuals involved. In 1954, the Leopold II Gallery in Ostend was renamed the James Ensor Gallery. During that same year in Antwerp, following a decision by the city council, the monument to Baron Dhanis was removed to make way for automobile traffic on Amerikalei. It was initially transferred to the front yard of the Colonial University, where it was damaged during a severe storm. It was later transported to a depot. It now stands in Middelheim Park, next to the former site of the aforementioned Colonial University. It was never restored.

As mentioned, in Flanders, more specifically in Keerbergen, streets were also named after the *mwami* of Rwanda and after Rwanda and Burundi, in memory of the *mwami*'s visit to the municipality in 1955 (see *§1.2.2.9.1*).

Starting in 1997, African associations began paying tribute on All Saints' Day to the graves of the seven Congolese who died in 1897 during the colonial exhibition in Tervuren.

As far as we know, the first intervention by white activists dates from 2004, when a group calling itself *De Stoeten Ostendenoare* (“The Bold Ostenders”) sawed off a hand from a Congolese statue that is part of the equestrian statue of Leopold II in Ostend. They donated the severed hand, with the affixed inscription *sikitiko* (*regret* in Swahili) to Congolese in Matonge, although only a small minority of Congolese actually live there and Lingala, not Swahili, is the working language of most Congolese in Belgium. In 2010,

Congolese from Brussels and Liège gathered in Ostend in protest over Lumumba's teeth. Their action ended at the monument of Leopold II.

In recent years, most other actions have focused on the statue of Joseph Lippens and Henri De Bruyne in Blankenberge, the statue of Jacques de Dixmude in Diksmuide, the statue of Leopold II in Ekeren, the statue of Father Constant De Deken in Wilrijk and the bust of Leopold II in Ghent.

As far as we know, it was also in Flanders that a lawsuit was filed for the first time to remove a colonial statue from public space: in 2008, the non-profit organisation *Internationaal Recht zonder Grenzen* filed a lawsuit against the City of Ghent to remove the bust of Leopold II. Their claim was rejected in 2010. Two years later, Dwars councillor Piet Wittevrongel filed an unsuccessful complaint with the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism against Blankenberge city council because the new information board next to the statue of Lippens and De Bruyne would to violate the historical truth.

1.3.2.1. Decisions by Flemish city and municipal councils

When in 2004 *De Stoeten Ostendenoare* sawed off the hand of a Congolese figure that is part of the equestrian statue of Leopold II in Ostend, no-one initially noticed their intervention. They had to inform the city council themselves. It then decided not to restore the hand because, this way, the image would be closer to reality.

According to our information, the first information board next to a colonial monument was erected in Flanders, specifically next to the statue of Leopold II in Halle in 2009. Information boards next to the statue of Father Constant De Deken in Wilrijk (2015), the bust of Leopold II in Ghent and the equestrian statue of Leopold II in Ostend (2016), the statue of Leopold II in Ekeren (2018), the Monument voor de Mechelse pioniers (*Monument for the Malines pioneers*) and Baron Jacquesstraat in Halle (2019) followed.

In 2017, the Geraardsbergen city council refused to place an information board at the colonial statue *Den Olifant*. In 2019, the City of Malines refused the placement of a counter-statue at the Monument voor de Mechelse pioniers (*Monument for the Malines Pioneers*). In 2020, Ostend city council opted for counter-statues and updating the information board instead of removing the equestrian statue of Leopold II. As part of the *street art* festival *The Crystal Ship*, actor Matthias Schoenaerts created a mural of a headless Leopold II as a counterpoint to the two statues of Leopold II in the city. It is in a different location to both statues.

Since 2018, almost all statues of Leopold II have received an explanatory sign, but these were written almost or exclusively without input from Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent. Since then, only two of the approximately 184 street names in Flanders with some link to the colonial past have been replaced with names that have nothing to do with the colonial past: in 2019, Koning Leopold II-laan in Kortrijk was renamed Rosa Laperelaan and, in 2021, the City of Ghent renamed Leopold II-laan Floraliënlaan. By comparison, of the six streets named after priest-collaborator Cyriel Verschaeve, only the one in Alveringem remains.

In 2019, the Flemish Roads and Traffic Agency decided to plant 600 maples of the variety named after Leopold II (*Acer pseudoplatanus* L. var. 'Leopoldii') over a period of two

years in Tervuren, between the Vierarmen junction and the Jazzfontein roundabout in front of the Africa Palace on the site of the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

After it was set on fire, the statue of Leopold II in Ekeren was transferred to the depot of the Middelheim Museum in Antwerp in 2020. That same year, the City of Ghent decided to transfer the bust of Leopold II, which had been ~~vandalised~~ several times even after an information board had been placed, to the depot of the municipal museum STAM.

After a petition, KU Leuven removed the bust of Leopold II from the central university library in 2020.

1.3.2.2. Decisions by the Flemish government and of Flemish municipalities and cities

2019 The College of Aldermen of the City of Ghent commissioned a decolonisation process. Those responding to this invitation included Ghent citizens of Sub-Saharan African descent, advisory boards, civil society organisations and associations that were part of 'Decolonise Ghent', colleges, Ghent University and stakeholders. The City did not address all of the group's recommendations, but decided to rename Leopold II-laan and expressed its intention to name a suitable location or new street or square after Lumumba during the current legislative term. His name had already been included in the register for potential street names.

2020 Bart Somers, Deputy Prime Minister of the Flemish government and Flemish Minister for Domestic Administration, Administrative Affairs, Integration and Equal Opportunities, commissioned recommendations to municipalities on how to deal with colonial traces. This 'guideline' places municipal autonomy at its core. Since its publication, no Flemish municipality has replaced any of the approximately 184 street names in Flanders with some link to the colonial past.

In Antwerp, Kunst in de Stad ('Art in the City', KIS), which operates under the wings of the Middelheim Museum, commissioned the historical project agency Geheugen Collectief ('Memorial Collective') to write a research report on the seven colonial works in the Middelheim collection, supplemented by one memorial, which is part of the side wall of the Borgerhout District House and does not belong to the collection, but is visible in the public domain. The report was intended to serve as a basis for the future dissemination of the colonial works in the collection to a wider audience, and will also be made publicly available online as a whole. This historical information/interpretation was supplemented with contemporary voices on the perception/appreciation of this heritage, to bridge the gap between history, academic research and current social reflections.KIS is working for the entire collection on the placement of physical information carriers with each collection piece with basic information and a digital access code (e.g. QR codes) for further, in-depth information and interpretation. Furthermore, KIS has commissioned artist Sammy Baloji to create a monumental work to be inaugurated in 2022.

The City of Leuven launched an online participatory decolonisation process to decolonise public space. It removed the statue of Leopold II from a niche in the Town Hall and named a street on the renovated Hertogen Site after Augusta Chiwy.

2021 The Halle College of Aldermen brought together a dozen interest groups to decide on the future of a statue of Leopold II and the statue Hulde aan de pioniers (*Homage to the Pioneers*). They were representatives of the "Decolonise Halle" working group that has been working for years to remove the statues, the culture council, the integration council, the Royal Historical and Archaeological Society and four Halle citizens of Congolese descent. An online survey was not successful: only 300 of the approximately 40,000 inhabitants participated; 80% opposed the removal of the images and preferred more information.

The College of Aldermen decided to leave the two statues in place, but to give them further interpretation and a new spatial arrangement: the statue of Leopold II was removed from its pedestal and placed on the ground, thus creating space for additional interpretation, photographic imagery, a QR code and a digital screen; Hulde aan de pioniers (*Homage to the Pioneers*) was overgrown with ivy.

1.3.3. Wallonia and Wallonia-Brussels Federation

Although about half of all the colonial memorials are in Wallonia, fewer actions take place there than in Brussels and Flanders. This may have something to do with the fact that these are significantly less clearly visible large colonial statues than in Brussels and Flanders. The difference between the largest Flemish cities (Antwerp and Ghent) and the largest Walloon cities (Liège and Charleroi) is particularly striking. On the other hand, Wallonia is leading the way in renaming streets after Congolese: in 2018, two street names were named after Patrice Lumumba (see *§1.3.3.3.*) versus one in Brussels (also in 2018, see *§1.3.1.2.1*), while in Flanders, a street was named after Augusta Chiwy in 2020 (see *§1.3.2.2.*). It is also in Wallonia, more specifically in Mons, that the first memorial plaque for Congolese was inaugurated in 2018.

1.3.3.1. *Campaigns*

2006 CADTM, based in Liège, began to run a campaign against the plaque in the town hall that remembers the people from Liège who died for 'civilization'.

2014 During Heritage Days, the association *Bakushinta* organised around the Chaltin monument the route followed by the Congolese volunteers who defended the city and created an exhibition about it.

2020 Statues of Leopold II in Arlon, Mons and Namur were ~~vandalised~~.

After a petition, the University of Mons removed a statue of Leopold II from the Faculty of Economics.

The *Platform Décolonisation des esprits et de l'espace public*, in collaboration with the *Centre d'Action Laïque de la Province de Liège*, organised a *Quinzaine décoloniale* in Mons.

2021 The *Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Lutte contre les Discriminations* organised a decolonial walk in Charleroi.

1.3.3.2. Wallonia-Brussels Federation

The Wallonia-Brussels Federation is aiming to develop the outlines of a participatory *modus operandi* for dealing with colonial heritage for the municipalities.

1.3.3.2. Walloon Brabant

2021 Espace-Vie, published by La Maison de l'urbanisme du Brabant wallon, published a theme issue *Empreintes coloniales et décoloniales dans les espaces publics et culturels*, which lists all the indirect and direct traces of the colonial past in the province.

1.3.3.3. Decisions by Walloon municipalities

2014 Augusta Chiwy became honorary citizen of the city of Bastogne.

2018 A memorial plaque was inaugurated in Mons for all those who fought for Congolese independence, in particular Lumumba and his fellow combattants Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito. This made them the first inhabitants of a former Belgian colony, mandate or trust territory to be commemorated by name in a public space. In this regard, the text explicitly referred to the monuments erected in honour of Belgians in Congo during the interwar period.

In Charleroi, the first Rue Lumumba was inaugurated. Paul Pastur, for whom the street was previously named, still has a statue in Charleroi.

The City Council of Liège installed an information board next to the memorial plaque for the people from Liège who died for ‘civilization’ in the Town Hall.

2020 The City of Verviers decided to contextualise colonial heritage through an educational work.

The City of Charleroi dedicated Rue Patrice Emery Lumumba in the city centre two days after the 60th anniversary of Congolese independence. However, it refused to remove the monument in the Town Hall that honours the colonial veterans.

In Bastogne, a nurses' monument was inaugurated for two volunteer nurses from the Battle of Bastogne during World War II, including Augusta Chiwy.

2022	The Mons Memorial Museum, which owns a marble statue of Paul Panda Farnana, hopes to host an exhibition on the decolonisation of public space.

CHAPTER 2
A DECOLONIAL PUBLIC SPACE

2.1. Historical background

2.1.1. Transatlantic Slave Trade

Africa is the cradle of humanity, but in the public mind, Sub-Saharan Africa only made its appearance in history with European colonisation during the second half of the 19th century. This was in line with the transatlantic slave trade, which peaked during the 18th century. This relatively short period radically changed the European view of Sub-Saharan Africa and its inhabitants.

Sub-Saharan Africa played a central role in the onset of what is commonly called the Modern Era. Europe had been trading indirectly with states in Sub-Saharan Africa for gold, ivory, and other commodities for centuries before Portuguese sailors, in search of gold, began to navigate the West African coastline and set foot there for the first time at the start of the 15th century. European and West African ambassadors and noblemen and, in the case of Europe, traders, travelled back and forth between the two continents. At the same time, Europeans began to employ enslaved Sub-Saharan Africans on plantations from almost the start of initial direct contact, at first in Madeira, then in Sao Tome and Principe and, in the early 16th century, in the Americas, beginning with the Caribbean. Not gold, but people would make the fortunes of Europeans in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As gradually only Sub-Saharan Africans were enslaved, the history of previous contact and of African empires was erased from the history books.[8] The political, religious, social and other identities of the continent's inhabitants were reduced to a single black, racial identity. This led, on the one hand, to the division of Africa into two regions, one north (North Africa) and one south of the Sahara (Sub-Saharan Africa) and, on the other hand, to the identification of Africa with being black: many people speak of 'Africa' when they actually mean Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the context of the transatlantic slave trade, pseudoscientific theories about the existence of different 'races' within the human species, coupled with an evolutionary model of the development of human cultures, were to justify the trade in Africans from sub-Saharan regions from the 18th century onwards. Black people were said to be biologically inferior to white people and culturally in the initial, inferior stages of human development that culminated in the so-called civilisation of white people. The fact that they were treated as commodities does not mean that black people did not consider themselves human beings. Conversely, it was not the case that opponents of slavery, the so-called abolitionists, believed that black people were their equals. The European colonisation of virtually all of Sub-Saharan Africa could be legitimised precisely from the view that the inhabitants were considered 'racially' and culturally inferior.

[8] On the use of the terms "slave" and "enslaved", see *Glossary*.

2.1.2. The race for and the European colonisation of Sub-Saharan Africa

Before the Industrial Revolution, European and Sub-Saharan African states were technologically matched. It was only thanks to a number of achievements related to the Industrial Revolution and the use of quinine as a medication that Europeans managed to penetrate the interior of Sub-Saharan Africa from the coasts during the second half of the 19th century. In 1905, only Liberia and Ethiopia were not colonies. European colonisation had to meet two needs created by the Industrial Revolution: new raw materials and expanded markets to sell into. The so-called civilising mission that Europeans used to legitimise their colonisation masked a harsh economic reality: colonisation forcibly integrated Sub-Saharan Africans into the capitalist market economy, in which many were employed through forced labour.

Leopold II became King of the Congo Free State in 1885. The name referred to the fact that Congo was independent of Belgium and international trade could be conducted within its borders. Driven by greed, Leopold II exercised a reign of terror over his private property that was extraordinarily cruel even by the standards of the time. However, even his most critical opponents did not question the need to colonise the populations living in the Congo Free State in order to 'civilise' them. Some of them, such as Edward Dene Morel and Emile Vandervelde, expressed decidedly racist views about Congolese .

Under international pressure, Leopold II was forced to hand over the administration of Congo to Belgium in 1908, a year before his death. Belgian rule over Belgian Congo during and after the colonial period was routinely described as paternalistic, a term that actually functioned as a euphemism for racist. Indeed, after South Africa, Belgian Congo had the highest degree of racial segregation on the entire continent. The colonial government reintroduced forced labour and brutally suppressed any form of protest. It intervened in far-reaching ways in the organisation of Congolese societies and their cultures and introduced the *Code Napoléon*, which reduced the status of Congolese women to that of minors in relation to their husbands.

In the mandate and later trust territories of Ruanda-Urundi over which Belgium exercised power after its victory over Germany in 1918, the colonial government racialised the social differences between Tutsi and Hutu.

2.1.3. Colonial and post-colonial racism

Even before the independence of Congo in 1960 and of Rwanda and Burundi in 1962, science had shown that there are no different 'races'. More recent genetic research confirms all the more that there is only one human race. However, this does not mean that racism no longer exists. Ideas about the biological inferiority of Sub-Saharan Africans and the inferiority of their cultures did not disappear with political independence.

There is no official racial segregation in Belgium, but systemic racism (structural and systematic discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion) and micro-aggressions still exist. Especially when combined, these various forms of racism have an impact not only on the socio-economic situation of individuals, but also on their physical and mental well-being. The research conducted by the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to

Racism (CECLCR) in 2011 (see *Chapter 1*) shows that white Belgians have a more favourable view of persons of Sub-Saharan African descent than of other minority groups, but that they view them as 'lazy', 'inferior', 'cheerful', 'playful' and 'vain'. The research suggests that contemporary racism toward people of Sub-Saharan descent is strongly influenced by its historical, colonial context:

'(...) the primitive black of the colonial past, who was close to nature, unintelligent and was only capable of manual and physical labour, [is], in the 21st century, still entrenched in many minds. Yet it happens in a more positive way: music and dance are ingrained in him, he is good at sports, he performs better sexually and physically, but he remains less intelligent and civilised than the European. We can conclude that 'contemporary' racism is strongly influenced by its historical context' (CECLCR, 2011, translated by *).

In other words, the seemingly 'positive' stereotypical traits systematically attributed to persons of Sub-Saharan descent also have a racist and colonial basis. These stereotypes equally reduce persons of Sub-Saharan descent to their physicality and generate a problematic image that is beyond the control of the persons themselves. Moreover, cultural racism – including positive stereotypes – supposes an inherited nature of such stigmas, passed down from generation to generation, independent of individual characteristics of the members of the assumed group (see the concept of 'tribal' stigma, developed by E. Goffman (1963)). According to the study, Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent themselves are more likely to report being victims of prejudice and discrimination by white Belgians than other minority groups and explain this on the basis of their appearance and skin colour. The CECLCR also referred to previous research that has shown that in the Brussels-Capital Region, people from Sub-Saharan Africa with a higher level of education are more likely to be unemployed and, when they have a degree and a qualification, they are more likely to be forced to accept a job that is not necessarily commensurate with their level of study or qualification, because their intelligence is constantly being questioned. Finally, the CECLCR also mentioned that several surveys have shown that persons from Sub-Saharan Africa face difficulties in renting an apartment or house even more than other foreign populations, because owners consider them to be noisy and uncaring (*ibid.*).

In its 2019 report, the United Nations Expert Working Group on People of African Descent (see C*hapter 1*) wrote that there is clear evidence of endemic discrimination against these people in Belgian institutions. The Working Group describes Belgium as a perfect example of the connection between racism in the past and in the present, based on statements from civil society organisations that point to the relationship between the battle against this discrimination and colonial imagery. The Working Group noted a lack of general knowledge and recognition of the cultures, history and heritage of people of African descent and expressed concern about the public memorials dedicated to King Leopold II and the officers of the *Force Publique*, who were complicit in atrocities in the Congo. It expressed the view that Belgians must finally face and acknowledge the role of Leopold II and of Belgium in colonisation and its long-term consequences for Belgium and Africa in order to close this dark chapter and bring about reconciliation and healing. Finally, it also expressed support for the proposed commemorative initiative to recognise the facts and the involvement of various Belgian institutions in the colonisation of Burundi, Congo and Rwanda, as proposed in a parliamentary motion on 14 February 2017 (DOC 54 2307/00) (Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent, 2019).

2.2. Decoloniality and decolonisation

Decoloniality and decolonisation are often used as synonyms. However, they have a different history and, strictly speaking, a different meaning.

2.2.1. Political, cultural and economic decolonisation

Decolonisation very generally refers to the historical process of colonised peoples freeing themselves from their domination by colonisers.

The political decolonisation of European colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa began with the independence of Ghana in 1957. After official independence, the struggle for economic and cultural independence continued in many countries. Through a decolonisation of the mind, former colonial subjects had to connect with pre-colonial cultures that the former colonisers considered inferior.

According to President Mobutu Sese Seko's ideology of *Authenticité*, Congolese had to reconnect with their cultures from which colonisation had alienated them. In that context, the inhabitants were called Zaireans, and the land, inhabitants, stream and currency were called Zaire, cities, lakes, etc. were given Zairean names, non-Zairean names were banned, and all colonial statues were removed from public spaces.

2.2.2. Post-colonial theory

During the 1990s, humanities scholars investigated the ways in which colonial conceptions and practices continued to shape white perceptions of non-white people even after political independence in relation to the unequal power relations that remained between them. As such, post-colonial theory shifted attention from the decolonisation of the minds of former colonial subjects to the decolonisation of the minds of former colonisers. Chronologically and geographically, this movement was largely limited to the period of the transatlantic slave trade and the European overseas colonisation of countries in Africa and Asia. This can be explained by the fact that post-colonial theorising was dominated by intellectuals who came from former European colonies in Africa and Asia and usually worked in the global North.

In his influential book *Orientalism* (1978), Edward W. Said (of Palestinian origin) posited that the West had invented the Orient as the antithesis of Western values and the Western habitus. Following Said, Christopher Miller (1985) coined the neologism 'Africanism' to refer to a Western tradition of representations of Sub-Saharan Africa that aim to exert control over the subcontinent. Recently, Johnny Van Hove (2017) introduced the term 'Congoism' to describe how, for American and European intellectuals, Congo has functioned since the 19th century as the ultimate other, the negative mirror image of everything they think represents their culture.

2.2.3. The concept of decoloniality

Early in this century, South American humanities scholars introduced the concept of decoloniality in response to post-colonial theory. They share with the intellectuals of this

movement the conviction that colonial power relations and conceptions still colour the present. But they accuse them of operating within European and North American academia with Western concepts. At best, they say, this leads to a Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism.

Contrary to post-colonial theory, which is limited to describing post-colonial conditions, supporters of decoloniality argue for action to end them. From this perspective, they campaign by demanding radical equality among all people everywhere as regards differences based on skin colour, class, age, religion, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, language, specific healthcare needs, etc. This radical equality cannot be imposed from above, but requires a commitment from everyone. In doing so, decoloniality connects post-colonial theory with activities inspired by decolonisation. At the same time, it transcends the contradiction of the decolonisation of minds by either former colonisers or former colonised. Its development in South America helps explain why the colonialism opposed by theorists of decoloniality began with the transatlantic slave trade and the colonisation of the Americas beginning in the late 15th century.

Decoloniality denies the existence of neutral knowledge: everyone derives, constructs and communicates knowledge from a particular position. This can lead to power relationships that need to be balanced out. Fundamentally, decoloniality focuses on the ways in which we acquire knowledge about the world in which we live:

- What do we know? From what point of view do we look at the world? What blind spots do we have?
- How do we know? How do we build up our knowledge? How do we draw the distinction between what we recognise as knowledge and anything we do not ('superstition', 'belief', 'opinions', 'prejudices', etc.)?
- What standards do we maintain? Who draws up these standards? Whose claims of knowledge are not recognised (Rutazibwa, 2018)?

As such, decoloniality is a way to:

- examine racially based colonialism that was predominantly developed by white cisgender heterosexual citizens about groups of people they considered to be different: biologically inferior, animalistic, stupid, homosexual, hypersexual, irrational, emotional, less developed, uncivilised, primitive, female, savage, etc.;
- demonstrate how modernity was built on the exploitation of these 'others';
- counter Eurocentric perspectives by recognising and validating knowledge and memories that were repressed, forgotten, buried, or discredited by coloniality.

Decoloniality seeks to replace the colonial power matrix with a project of radical equality by:

- a radical dismantling of 'race', class and gender hierarchies, language and religious differences and heteronormativity;
- a radical diversification of the content of forms of knowledge;
- a radical decentralisation of knowledge and knowledge production;
- a radical multiplicity that goes beyond inclusion to take into account not only the different perspectives *between* population groups, but also *within* each of them.

Decoloniality posits an intersectional approach that pays attention to the ways in which social inequality occurs along different axes which intersect ('race', age, class, religion, gender, sex, sexual orientation, specific healthcare needs, etc.) in all possible domains: cultural, economic, political, social, etc.

The term 'artivism' (a contraction of the English words *art* and *activism*) highlights how, in decolonial practice, the boundaries between activism and art creation are blurred.

FIG. 8. Precy Numbi, *Robot-Sapiens Kimbalambala*, 2020 (Art Congo Eza). Numbi walks around Brussels in an outfit made out of recycled materials to to sensitize the public for a decolonial ecology. (Photo: Teddy Mazina)

2.3. Decoloniality in Belgium

In 1992, Argentine artist David Lamelas created the installation *Quand le ciel bas et lourd* in the garden of the Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp for the exhibition *America: Bride of the Sun – 500 Years of Latin America and the Low Countries*. In the broadest sense of the word, decoloniality in the Belgian context also refers to contact between Belgium and the American continent, the arrival of so-called guest workers, the presence of Rom/Roma, Sinti, etc.

Given the mandate given to the Working Group, in the Belgian context, a decolonial perspective means a perspective on Belgium's colonial past in particular:

- a recognition of the violent and racist nature of Leopold II's and Belgium's rule over Congo and Belgium's rule over Rwanda and Burundi and its impact on persons of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent, and by extension, all persons of Sub-Saharan African descent living in Belgium;
- a recognition of the extent to which colonial perceptions of black people had been influenced by the transatlantic slave trade;
- a recognition of the agency of people of Sub-Saharan African descent in their own history, including colonial history, and of the impact of that history on their current situation in Belgium;
- a recognition of the one-sided, selective and often historically flawed perspective that inspired existing intentional colonial traces in public space;
- a recognition of the knowledge that people of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent have about their own histories and cultures;
- a recognition of the link between the colonial past and the discrimination, exclusion and racism suffered by people of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent;

- a recognition of the different kinds of knowledge of people of Sub-Saharan African descent and people of Sub-Saharan African descent that is not / was not shown from a colonial perspective, or was shown incorrectly;
- a recognition of the need to make the history of the presence of people of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent visible in public space;
- a recognition of the legitimacy of protests against colonial memorials;
- a shared authority, expertise and decision-making on colonial memorials with Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent;
- an acknowledgement of the racist portrayal of Sub-Saharan Africans from Zanzibar and residents of the Swahili Coast in East Africa in certain intentionally specific colonial commemorative traces in public spacs;
- the understanding that minorities within the super-diverse society do not simply need to adapt to the norm, but that the existing norms of mainstream society are in need of change (see Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid [Scientific Council for Government Policy], 2007).

The colonial power matrix can be maintained in very different and diverse ways. Often, people are not aware of how this matrix works, which is why it is perpetuated, even by those concerned with decoloniality. Hence the importance of a thorough understanding of the various aspects of colonial thinking. A few examples may suffice.

1. It is notable that, up to now, there have been more references in Belgian public space to individuals and events related to the colonial past of countries that were not involved in Belgian colonisation than to Belgian colonial history. We thus find streets named after Nelson Mandela in Ghent, Hermalle-sous-Huy, Mouscron, Schelle, Visé and Wevelgem, while Ghent also has an Albertina Sisulu Bridge, a Steve Biko Bridge and a Miriam Makeba Square. A mural in Laeken (created by Novadead, see *Chapter 1*) reminds us of the death of George Floyd, but Semira Adamu who died in a similar way in Belgium in 1998 is not commemorated anywhere in Belgian public space. There are three memorials in Brussels related to the Rwandan genocide in 1994, but nowhere in Belgium is the memory of the millions of Congolese who died under the rule of Leopold II kept alive in public space. All of this creates the impression that it is easier to be critical of the colonial past and racism elsewhere than of Belgian colonial history and post-colonial racism Belgium.

2. The transatlantic slave trade (15th-19th centuries) and European overseas colonisation (15th-20th centuries) were European rather than national phenomena, in the sense that they continue to impact upon perceptions of black people today in countries that historically were not directly involved. This translates, among other things, into the fact that white Belgians generally do not distinguish between Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent and Belgians from other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, because, as mentioned above, the idea of a single black identity took hold as a result of the transatlantic slave trade. It means that not only Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent face anti-black racism. Conversely, the shared history of the slave trade and European colonisation of Sub-Saharan Africa means that Belgians from other former European colonies are also sympathetic towards decolonisiong public space in relation to the colonial past.

3. Experience shows that, once Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent bring issues such as reparations to the table, mainstream institutions, associations and political representatives appropriate the debate and push the initiators into the background or make them invisible.

4. Ostensibly, the selection for the Working Group is balanced between eight white and eight black members. But while gender balance was also respected among the white candidates selected (four men and four women), this is absolutely not the case among the black members: only one of the eight black candidates selected is a man. In addition, four of the group's black candidates selected are of 'mixed' descent, i.e. they have one white and one black parent or one white or black (great-)grandparent. Given that every human identity is multi-layered, it is impossible to assemble a group that satisfies all the characteristics that individuals may have.

   There could be many different dynamics at play here. It is possible that no or few black men applied for the Working Group or that there were few among the applicants who met the criteria set out. In turn, the over-representation of women among black members of the group may reflect an international trend: a great many decolonial movements such as, for example, the American *Black Lives Matter* came about at the initiative of young feminist black women who are also sympathetic to LGBTQIA+ rights.

   But other factors could also be at play unconsciously: the fact that white people historically perceived black men as more threatening and dangerous than black women in the context of the slave trade and colonisation (Werbner, 2005; Spivak, 1988) and/or that mainstream society in turn accepts people of 'mixed' descent more readily than black people: because they are not white, they are categorised as being black (Cruyen, 1946: 340), but at the same time, they are also considered less black and they derive their social and cultural capital largely from their knowledge of and position within mainstream society through their affinity (biologically or through adoption) to or relationships with white people.

   We point out these aspects because it is possible that they can tell us something about the way the colonial power matrix continues to function.

   As a Working Group, we do not know what dynamics played out, and we therefore do not conclude that the selection of Working Group members was motivated by a deliberate choice to maintain the colonial power matrix. But we do know that, in light of the history of the transatlantic slave trade and colonisation, distinctions drawn on the basis of gender and supposedly 'pure' versus 'mixed' racial origins (when biologically there is only one human race) were not innocent. A decolonial approach posits a thorough knowledge of such colonial patterns of thought and seeks to consciously and actively break them down.

2.4. Decolonising public space

2.4.1. The development of colonial public space

Urban planning and organisation is a political choice: it seeks to control urban spaces and its population by spatially integrating or excluding certain groups. Urban planning and the organisation of public space in European cities was closely linked to processes of 19th-century nation-building and overseas colonisation; we will limit ourselves here to elaborating on the Brussels case. It primarily reflected the transition from the Ancien Régime to liberal democracies dominated by the bourgeoisie, who planned the city to suit the male middle class and were less concerned with the needs and requirements of women and the working class.

Well into the 20th century, working-class neighbourhoods routinely had to give way to the construction of stately avenues, prestigious buildings and monuments. The famous Bruxellisation can be seen as a typical example: over time, it flattened entire neighbourhoods for the construction of the Palais de Justice and the Mont des Arts, the construction of the north-south connection, the demolition of the Northern Quarter, the redevelopment of the Leopold Quarter for the European institutions and the demolition of the neighbourhood around the South Station.

At the same time, from the 19th century onwards, work started on the systematic restoration and/or reconstruction of historic buildings. The criteria for demolishing or preserving and restoring buildings or entire neighbourhoods were primarily aesthetic and historical and did not take into account the affective relationships that residents of working-class neighbourhoods could have with their surroundings. Research has since shown that forced relocation as a result of urban restructuring can have a negative impact on residents' mental health and their sense of belonging to their neighbours and the neighbourhood in which they live.

With their imposing buildings such as courthouses and train stations, national museums and monuments on the one hand, and their historical patrimony on the other, 19th-century monumental cities were supposed to represent the (colonial) nation state and its history, from a perspective that favoured progress and civilisation. The outdated view that history is a succession of events set in motion by individual great men (and the occasional woman) led to the combination of monuments, plaques, statues and the names of streets, squares, avenues and tunnels that honoured important people and events in a lasting and permanent way: a kind of open-air museum in which the history of the country was revealed in public space for all its citizens, including the many who could not read or write before the introduction of compulsory education (in Belgium, from 1914). Visual reminders of historically significant individuals in public space were thus to contribute to the development of a national identity. This focus on the visual aspect pushed other sensory perceptions (such as the sound of church bells that had given rhythm to daily life for centuries) into the background.

Critics coined the term ‘statuomania’ to describe the many monuments deliberately created to honour certain individuals. Under the influence of the liberal bourgeoisie, tributes were no longer paid solely to religious or royal figures in public space, but also to other prominent figures throughout time. In independent Belgium, after 1830, it

involved both individuals from a more or less distant past, from Godfrey of Bouillon to Anthony van Dyck, and individuals who had recently died: Pierre-Théodore Verhaegen (the founder of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, who was the first 'ordinary citizen' to receive a monument in 1865), champions of Belgian independence such as Charles Rogier, etc. With a few exceptions (e.g. Gabrielle Petit, who was the first working-class woman in Europe to receive a statue in Brussels in 1923), tributes were mainly paid to white men. After World War I, a culture of remembrance developed around fallen soldiers, culminating in the cult of the unknown soldier. However, these tributes were limited to white soldiers, even when colonial subjects had fought alongside them, as was the case for the British and French empires and in the Belgian context for Congo (see *Chapters 1 and 3*).

In Belgium, the ideology of progress was very clearly expressed, among other things, in the creation of colonial monuments and toponymy that emphasized the Belgian 'civilising mission' in the Congo. Colonisation was part of a larger national project around which Belgian citizens could unite. As such, colonial imagery and toponymy were unambiguously Belgian (Stanard, 2019: 201). Colonial three-dimensional images nationalised the conquest and colonisation of the Congo, ignoring the role played by non-Belgians: for example, streets were named after the British Henry Morton Stanley (who later became an American citizen) and David Livingstone, and the Frenchman Captain Léopold Joubert, but they were not given a monument in Belgium.

We can therefore describe intentional colonial commemorative signs in the public space as expressions of a colonial nationalism that manifested itself in very different forms, from monumental statues and buildings that were intended to impress or overwhelm passers-by (the location also plays an important role here, as with the equestrian statue of Leopold II on the Place du Trône in Brussels) with toponymy as a form of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995). The latter refers to the everyday and routine representations that reproduce the nation state and can thus unconsciously create a shared sense of national identity. Thus, the colonial culture of remembrance could legitimise and celebrate a national colonial project across linguistic differences and class distinctions.

2.4.2. Towards decolonial public space

Urban spaces reflect existing social relationships within urban society, relationships from both the present and the past. On the one hand, urban public space are largely shaped by policy-makers, architects and urban planners –who often reflect the diversity of the users of these spaces only to a limited extent. On the other, 'physical' urban spaces become truly 'public' only through the way they are democratically used and managed. Sociologist Pascal Gielen (cited in De Voeght, 2017) therefore distinguishes between:

- **open spaces**: the physical places in which we may move freely as citizens, without the consent or permission of third parties: streets, parks, squares, etc;
- **public space**: the public space that is constantly recreated through certain actions: a (public) space only becomes public when diverse voices, opinions and images can be present;
- **civic spaces** that are organised so that people can exercise free speech there.

In theory, all citizens are free to shape public and civic spaces together. In practice, unfortunately, it does not work that way, because certain groups, on the basis of their

sex, gender, national origin, religion, etc., do not participate, or hardly participate, in the bodies that make decisions about public space. The extent to which Belgium's post-colonial public space still reflect social relations between former colonisers vis-à-vis colonised people (Dewilde, 2021) is evidenced by the fact that there are hardly any intentional commemorative signs for non-white citizens or female citizens. If erecting a monument to an ordinary citizen in Brussels in 1865 and to a working-class woman in 1923 was a strong political statement, the expectation now is that diversity within the category of citizens will be recognised in public space. In the past, the lack of representation in urban planning and in what Gielen calls public and civic spaces had already led to people illegally expressing their discontent. Thus, illegal graffiti developed in America and Europe in part in response to the ways in which public space was given shape: through their work, many artists sought to reclaim certain parts of the city from big business, private property and/or the commercialisation of public space. Contesting colonial memorials through protest actions, graffiti, damage, etc. is a similar form of dissent: it is a political response to the political use of public space, which should not be confused with vandalism motivated by boredom, destructiveness, etc.

Whatever form they took, colonial memorials make a statement about the ideas and values of the members of the society who created them: they showed who needed to be remembered and even honoured and who did not. They placed events, locations and people both literally and figuratively on a pedestal, elevated above others. As such, they were symbols of the political context in which they were created: they needed to legitimise the existing political system. Leaving them as they are, without contextualising them or making room for other commemorative signs, gives the impression that they are still considered representative of today's society.

Furthermore, decolonial thinking also poses fundamental challenges to historiography. Historiography attempts to reconstruct the past on the basis of a limited number of sources, especially written texts. These are primarily representative of those who wrote them and brought them together in archives. As far as the colonial period is concerned, they give preference to the archives and thus the perspectives of the colonisers, completely or partially neglecting those of the colonised.

Moreover, the monument culture of the 19th and early 20th centuries is based on the erroneous assumption that history can be reduced to a sequence of facts set in motion by ‘great’ individuals. The past, including the colonial past, is understood by contemporary historians as a far more complex interplay of constantly changing systemic dimensions and diverse actors, and this understanding must also be followed up in revising the representation of the past, particularly the colonial past.

Intentional colonial commemorative signs thus do not show “true” history, but at most the history of who or what during a period was deemed worthy of commemoration in public space, and this often no longer corresponds to what we find memorable within today's society. This is all the more true of the colonial past and the colonial hero cult. As such, they communicated a powerful, unified message from a specific perspective that involved a series of value judgements about who represented society and who was excluded from it. Therefore, they now inevitably raise a number of questions:

- why are certain historical events, sites and individuals commemorated in public space as opposed to others?

- whose point of view do they represent?
- which viewpoints of which members of society are excluded?

Just as colonial memorials were created in a specific political context, they are now being questioned because the political context has changed. A changing political situation goes hand in hand with changing ways of looking back at the past and giving it a place within public space for example by foregrounding other historical events, sites and individuals, as well as by shifting attention from individuals and events to structures and systems.

Protesting against intentional colonial memorials does not mean viewing the colonial past exclusively through a contemporary lens; it also, and not least, means calling attention to a history that is underexposed in the dominant narrative, namely, the various ways in which colonised individuals and groups resisted the colonial system during the colonial period and, over time, archived and remembered colonial history themselves.

A decolonial perspective on heritage shifts the focus from *what heritage is* to *who gets to decide what it is*. It means that historical monuments, for example, are no longer viewed as a form of heritage that has inherent value, and must be preserved intact and passed on to future generations, but that one starts from the question of who determines what heritage is and assigns values and meaning to it. In more recent academic literature, heritage is analysed as a subjective and political negotiation of identity, place and memories, a cultural process and implementation, concerned with the mediation and negotiation of cultural and historical values and narratives (Waterton & Smith, 2009). It also means that the criteria that a building or urban feature must meet to be recognised as heritage are no longer limited to heritage of white citizens, but that Pierre Nora's concept of (white) national 'memory sites' [*lieux de mémoire*] must be extended to 'memory nodes' [*noeuds de mémoire*] for all citizens, wherever they come from (Rothberg, 2010).

As such, decolonising public space is a necessary condition for the creation of a democratic society. It takes place in the organisation of negotiations on the differences of opinion that may exist between citizens, based on the awareness that public space is built on the basis of exclusionary mechanisms that express themselves in the organisation of public and civic spaces and that will continue to prevail as long as unequal power relations exist between different groups in society. **That is why, until further notice, decolonising public space is a process without an end point.** It is about transforming the existing colonial public space based on the norms of the citizens who historically created it into a decolonial and therefore truly inclusive public space that adapts its norms, taking into account the ideas of other citizens. In doing so, it is important to realise that traces of remembrance and commemoration do not rembember by themselves, but are remembered and commemorated by individuals and groups. Remembering and remembrance thus form a continuous process of inscription and re-inscription, coding and recoding with no end point (*ibid.*).

From a decolonial vision, decolonising is not limited to *ad hoc* actions for or against individual colonial traces in public space, but is intended to lead to the development of a transversal and continuous decolonial policy, based on an overall vision of the colonial dimensions of public space, in collaboration with other actors.

2.4.3. Towards the decolonisation of public space in relation to Belgium's colonial past

Over time, campaigns were run against the presence of intentional colonial traces in Brussels' public space or against the absence of statues or street names intended to keep alive the memory of other aspects of Belgian colonisation. This is in line with the growing presence of Belgians originating from former Belgian Africa and their descendants and is part of their emancipation struggle. Their protests are often mistakenly seen as a call for iconoclasm and classified under the heading of 'identity politics'. In reality, it is about broadening and deepening perspectives on colonial history, and this broadening and deepening is intended to have repercussions for the commemoration of the colonial past in the public sphere, beyond the one-sided viewpoint of the victors. Fundamentally, it is about claiming civil rights: the historically one-dimensional and incorrect perspective that emanates from colonial commemorative signs confirms the refusal of mainstream society to acknowledge its problematic colonial past and thus its impact on current society through the continuous colonial view of Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent that leads to various forms of racism, discrimination and exclusion. What many (obviously not all, see *Chapter 1*) white citizens consider to be something indifferent, heritage or part of 'history', Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent experience as a form of violence, an attack on a part of their history and thereby also on themselves as members of a larger group and as individuals.

In a diverse society, where about 1 Belgian in 10 now comes from Sub-Saharan Africa, most of whom are from the former colony of Congo (Schoumaker & Schoonvaere, 2014), colonial heritage can no longer unilaterally and triumphalistically recall the conquest, colonisation, and 'civilization' of the former Belgian Africa, without considering the ways in which people of the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi and their descendants remember the colonial period and want to keep these memories alive in public space. Strictly speaking, the transatlantic slave trade is beyond the scope of the working group. Nonetheless, it does have regard to it, because the portrayal of enslaved and colonised people in public space reveals the extent to which the portrayal of black Africans during the colonial period was influenced by the transatlantic slave trade.

2.4.4. Towards decolonial public space in relation to Belgium's colonial past in Brussels

The Working Group was commissioned to make concrete proposals for decolonising Brussels' public space concerning Belgium's colonial past in a structural and inclusive way, as part of a work of dialogue and remembrance (see *Chapter 1*). However, decolonising public space is not separate from decolonising other aspects of Belgian society in general and of Brussels in particular. From the decolonial vision that the Working Group holds, decolonisiong public space is ideally part of a far broader process of social emancipation throughout Belgium. In the Brussels-Capital Region, what this means in practice is that decolonising Brussels' public space is not separate from other regional competences, such as housing, international relations, local governance, movable and immovable heritage, urban planning and employment policy, as well as community powers in terms of culture, healthcare, aid and education.

What is it worth to fill Brussels with Lumumba statues, so to speak, when Belgians of Sub-Saharan African descent are being set back in education, cannot find a job or are unable to find a job commensurate with their level of education, are discriminated against in the housing market, die in suspicious circumstances during police interventions, etc.? However, this does not mean that decolonising public space is merely symbolic. Racism is a wide-ranging, complex phenomenon and, as such, must be addressed in all its facets.

According to the Belgian statistical office Statbel, one-third of the Belgian population is of foreign origin or has a foreign nationality, rising to three in four in Brussels (Lefevere, 2021). According to the 2015 *World Migration Report*, Brussels is the second-most diverse city in the world, after Dubai. About half of all the Congolese living in Belgium reside in Brussels.

FIG. 9. Aimé Ntakiyica, *Le fils de l'homme*, 2005

In order to identify as a member of a Belgian 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983), all the residents of the Brussels-Capital Region must be able to recognise themselves in the open-air museum made up of national memorials, statues and other monuments in public space. In contrast, when a dominant group imposes its vision of national history and the nation state on all citizens, it amounts to a symbolic form of violence.

A decolonial public space is not a space from which all traces of the colonial past are removed. It is one that is free from material elements that promote colonialism and unequal and racialised relations between colonisers and colonised, and is simultaneously attentive to traces in public space that refer to forgotten histories related to the colonial period and the presence of Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian origin.

Intentional colonial commemorative signs in public space show colonial imagery over time. This imagery must not be erased: it is important to know this history to realise that today's racism has a history. Erasing that history makes it all the easier to deny the existence of modern-day racism and all the harder to combat it.

The question arises as to what to do with colonial traces in public space that no longer correspond to our current values, but do have artistic or historical value. A case-by-case analysis is required to negotiate the presence of that past, from the view that who determines what heritage is can change across time and space (Waterton & Smith, 2009).

CHAPTER 3
TRACES AND SYMBOLS OF COLONIALISM IN THE BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION

In light of its role in the history of the Duchy of Brabant, the Seventeen Provinces, the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, Belgium, the Belgian colonial empire and the European Union, the Brussels-Capital Region retains many traces of its past and of the composition of its very diverse population. Given the mission of the Working Group, we will limit ourselves to the traces that refer to the transatlantic slave trade, the colonial past and the presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians since the colonial period. While monuments in particular – in the form of statues, busts, or in other forms – and toponyms associated with the colonial past are currently being contested, these intentional signs of commemoration make up only a fraction of the traces of colonialism that exist in the public realm.

In this chapter, we will present a broader, albeit incomplete, overview of traces of colonialism in the Brussels-Capital Region. Occasionally, we will also refer to colonial traces that exist elsewhere in Belgium. We will also refer to choices that have already been made in other regions and cities in Belgium, as opposed to in Brussels. Decolonising public space is not just about a critical revision of who or what is/or will continue to be honoured by a sign of commemoration, or not. It is also about how we deal with historical traces as documents of knowledge and as prompts with which to develop more complex, multi-voiced decolonial historical narratives that are embedded in the public space of the city, including traces that indicate the historical presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians.

We will primarily rely on the publications of Lucas Catherine (2002; 2006; 2019), whose approach is consistent with that of the Working Group, on the books of Matthew Stanard (2011; 2019), who limits himself to intentional colonial traces (commemorative monuments), on unpublished research by Chantal Kesteloot on colonial toponymy in Brussels and on unpublished research by Maarten Gabriëls on toponymy related to Rwanda and Burundi in Keerbergen. With regard to traces that testify to the presence of Congolese , we mainly have to rely on publications by people of Congolese origin such as Mathieu Zana Etambala (1993; 2011), Valérie Kanza (2007-2008), Antoine Tshitungu Kongolo (1992; 2011) and Mayoyo Bitumba Tipo-Tipo (1995).

3.1. Colonial traces

The colonial past is reflected in public space both through the presence and the absence of all kinds of traces. In this case, the word ‘traces’ refers in the most general sense to elements in public space that point to the colonial history that links Belgium to the Congo, Rwanda and/or Burundi. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between three main types of traces – (intentional) colonial memorials, (intentional) instruments of colonial propaganda, and (non-intentional) indirect colonial heritage – which in turn can be subdivided into visible/readable and invisible/unreadable or less readable traces. (In)visible or unreadable/less readable traces are not fixed categories but depend on the knowledge that certain individuals or groups have of the history of the transatlantic slave trade, of colonial history or of the history of the presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgium. For many passers-by, for example, the Hotel Plaza in Brussels City is a hotel like many others, while many Belgians of Congolese descent and lovers of Congolese popular music know it as the place where the Congolese orchestra *African*

Jazz performed during the Political Roundtable in Brussels from 20 January to 20 February 1960, and where they first played the song *Indépendance Cha Cha*.

3.1.1. Memorials

Debates about decolonising public space are often largely limited to statues, monuments, and toponymic designations that were once purposely put in place to commemorate the Belgian colonial enterprise in general or events, locations, or individuals in particular. This customary focus has everything to do with the fact that this first group of historical traces specifically consists of monumental works of art and place names that were once put in place with the intention of establishing an appreciative, venerating memory – while it is precisely that memorability of what is represented by these contested monuments and place names that is being urgently called into question today and which in many cases has lost its support. This dynamic is peculiar to the nature of intentional memorials: they were erected to reinforce a message in the (then) present through the creation of a public monument and to keep it in the memory of future generations, thanks to their prominent position in the public realm and as a result of the durability of the materials used. However, these future generations may also break the continuity of the memory 'imposed' or demanded by the monument – either passively through neglect, or actively by means of removal or by other symbolic interventions. The symbolism of erecting monuments has traditionally – and also since the development of the modern heritage regime – had its counterpart in the pulling down of monuments and the renaming of buildings or places, especially at moments of social and political change, such as revolutions and regime changes (the French Revolution, decolonisation, the fall of the Berlin Wall and so on).

The first group of traces includes names of streets, squares and infrastructure, statues and busts on pedestals such as the equestrian statue of Leopold II on the Place du Trône (cf. *Section 4.3.1.1.*), or the bust of Emile Storms on the Square De Meeûs (cf. *Section 4.3.1.3.*), but also more complex monumental constructions that not only depict but also symbolise what is being commemorated. The monument to Albert Thys at the entrance to the Parc du Cinquantenaire, for example, combines a slab with the portrait of the man in profile and identifying lettering ('General Albert Thys 1838-1915') on the stone plinth, with a symbolist group of sculptures on the plinth in which one of the two female figures represents the riches of Africa (cf. *Section 4.3.1.2.8.*). The *Monument to the Belgian Pioneers in Congo* in the Parc du Cinquantenaire is an example of an architectural-sculptural monument with a complex iconography and message (cf. *Section 4.3.1.2.7.*). The triumphal arch in the Parc du Cinquantenaire is an example of an intentional, distinctively architectural memorial, in which the venerating memory of colonialism is propagated only as a secondary purpose (cf. *Section 4.3.1.2.2.*).

As such, some colonial traces are more visible to and readable by most passers-by today than others. Examples of the colonial traces that are less visible and more difficult to read are:

- graves of Congolese soldiers who fought along the Yser front during World War I, who are buried separately in municipal cemeteries rather than in a joint soldiers' cemetery in the Westhoek and as such are also not part of official commemorations of the war (more generally, the participation of Congolese members of the armed

forces in the Two World Wars, including in Africa, does not feature within the official and popular memories of either conflict);

- ambiguous street name signs whose colonial connotations are unclear (cf. *Chapter 4*);
- a replica of the mermaid from the sunken Congo boat Baudouinville in Etterbeek, which at first glance appears to be simply a statue of a mermaid (cf. *Section 4.3.1.6.*);
- images and monuments that use a visual language that is no longer current (cf. *Chapter 4*).

FIG. 10. Monument to general Thys (Thomas Vinçotte and Frans Huygelen), inaugurated in 1926. (Photo: Urban.brussels, 2010)

3.1.2. Instruments of colonial propaganda

Numerous individual memorials from the previous group also formed part of a colonial propaganda culture (cf. *Section 3.3.10.1*). In this second group, we will refer more specifically to buildings, sites and works of art. Again, overlaps are possible because works of art can be placed inside buildings and can be installed on sites as instruments of colonial propaganda.

The buildings and sites, whose main or ancillary purpose was to achieve a propagandistic effect and which, by virtue of their urban design, their architecture, but also by means of their interior design, exhibitions and other (institutional) activities, were directed towards different audiences, include:

- the Royal Museum for Central Africa, which was created by Leopold II;
- the Hôtel van Eetvelde which was conceived by its owner, Baron Edmond van Eetvelde, the State Secretary of the Congo Free State, as a deliberate propaganda tool (cf. *Section 4.3.3.2.*);

- the Lever House in Brussels-City, which is the representative headquarters of a private multinational colonial company, which includes sculptures in the central entrance hall similar to some of those in the Royal Museum for Central Africa (cf. *Section 4.3.3.1.*).

Among the less visible/well-readable buildings we include, for example:

- the former Palace of the Colonies (now Africa Palace) that Leopold II had built for the colonial exhibition in Tervuren in 1897;
- the triumphal arch in the Parc du Cinquantenaire (cf. Section *4.3.1.2.2.*).

The line between the architectural representation of government institutions and colonial representation and propaganda is not always easy to draw. In that regard, the Royal Palace in Brussels, together with, among others, the BELvue Museum (the former Hotel Bellevue, cf. *Section 3.3.2.1.*) and the Place du Trône with its equestrian statue of Leopold II, can be understood as a 'multimedia' complex representing the royal head of state and the monarchy, but which also overlaps with the representation of the colonial enterprise.

3.1.3. Indirect colonial heritage: buildings, parks, sites, urbanisation and neighbourhoods that require contrapuntal interpretation

In his book *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said (cf. *Chapter 2*) introduced the expression 'contrapuntal reading' for an interpretation and analysis of colonial texts that considers both the perspective of the coloniser and that of the colonised. He gives the example of Jane Austen's 1814 novel *Mansfield Park*, which is about the estate owned by the Bertram family. The family became wealthy through sugar plantations in Antigua, but this is barely mentioned in the novel. In a similar way, many sites, parks and buildings now do not allow themselves to be read easily because their link to the colonial past is not, or barely, visible. Examples include:

- buildings erected to make colonial propaganda, such as the Hôtel Van Eetvelde (cf. *Section 4.3.3.1*)
- buildings, parks and sites that were financed with money earned from the transatlantic slave trade or from the colonisation of the Congo;
- buildings and sites in which functions related to colonisation were carried out, from the Ministry of Colonies and the Colonial University to buildings in which temporary colonial fairs, conferences, and exhibitions were organised;
- buildings, sites and neighbourhoods that have played a role in the history of the presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgium;
- archival institutions and museums with collections relating to the colonial past and/or to the presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgium (cf. *Section 3.3.12*);

In general, such sites are less contested than intentional monuments and toponymic names, not only because their colonial layer is not always visible to everyone, but also because they are multifunctional: even if they were financed by Leopold II or others with connections to colonisation, or housed colonial services, they can be used for other

purposes. If they are called into question, it is more likely to relate to their function rather than their appearance. The Royal Museum for Central Africa, for example, is contested not only because it was financed by Leopold II (the same is true, for example, of the Central Station and the Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp), but also because throughout the colonial period, it was used for colonial propaganda, because the way in which most of the collections were acquired is in question, and because for a long time, the museum covered the history of its creation and Leopold II's reign of terror with the cloak of love, while its perspective on Congo remained thoroughly colonial.

Furthermore, it can be said in general that few locations historically marked by the presence of Congolese, Burundians and Rwandans are recognisable as such for most Belgians; exceptions being the neighbourhood and the bus and tram stops officially called Matonge and Rue du Ruanda in the Brussels-Capital Region, and the Ruandabinnenhof in Tervuren and the Mwami Mutaradreef, Ruandadreef and Burundidreef in Keerbergen in Flanders (cf. *Chapter 1*).

3.2. Colonial symbols

As they become visible and readable, some colonial traces can become symbols: they can be seen, for example, as exemplifying:

- the culture of colonial commemoration;
- the refusal to critically examine the colonial past;
- the refusal to pay attention to the history of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgium.

What stands as a symbol for something changes over time. What is recognised as a symbol by one group is not necessarily recognised as such by all.

3.3. General overview of colonial traces that are ‘visible’ and ‘readable’

Creating a classification based on the above criteria is not easy because they are subject to change, depend on the interpretation of different individuals and groups, and because some categories may overlap. In this chapter, the focus is on colonial traces that are visible and readable to the members of the Working Group based on the literature it consulted; it cannot be ruled out that the Working Group overlooked certain types of traces because it did not read all the relevant literature, because the amount of research performed that has been transformed into literature is still insufficient, or because certain existing knowledge has not yet been described.

Among the traces present we distinguish between:

- heritage linked to the transatlantic slave trade;
- urban planning projects;

- neighbourhoods with a concentration of activities and/or residents;
- sites on which colonial activities were organised;
- infrastructure;
- plants, parks, greenhouses and gardens;
- toponymy;
- buildings;
- intentional monuments and sculptures;
- statues and works of art in public space, including museums;
- brands and institutions established during the colonial period;
- visible opposition to colonial memorials (graffiti, paint, etc.).

Some of these categories overlap: buildings in neighbourhoods, monuments in parks, etc.

A distinction between public and private buildings cannot be sustained because some former public buildings are now privately owned and vice versa. The survey also refers to private buildings that are open to the public at certain times and/or in the form of visits.

3.3.1. Heritage linked to the transatlantic slave trade

During the 18th century, a number of individuals and families from the Southern Netherlands were involved in the transatlantic slave trade. For example, the blue stone house on the Rue de la Violette in Brussels City and the Beaulieu Castle in Machelen belonged to the slave trader Friedrich Romberg. Another slave trader, Edouard de Walckiers, owned Helmet Castle, which was also called Walckiers Castle and Parc Walckiers in Schaerbeek and built Belvedere Castle in Laeken which was later bought by Leopold II and is now managed by the Royal Foundation.

3.3.2. Urban planning interventions

3.3.2.1. Leopold II's achievements

Commenting on the removal of the bust of Leopold II from the Parc Duden in Forest in 2018, Marc-Jean Ghyssels, the mayor of the municipality, said:

> *'cette statue qui fait référence à Léopold II, non pas par rapport à son passé colonial mais par rapport au fait qu'il avait créé le parc Duden, fait partie du patrimoine bruxellois. . Je ne pense pas qu'en s'attaquant au patrimoine bruxellois dont tous les promeneurs du parc, dont tous les Bruxellois peuvent profiter, ce soit une bonne chose (cited in Vander Elst 2018).'* [This statue, which is a reference to Leopold II, not in relation to his colonial past but relating to the fact that he created the Parc Duden, forms part of heritage of Brussels. I do not think that attacking the heritage of Brussels, which is there for the benefit of all citizens of Brussels, is a good thing.] *(translated by *)*

However, Leopold II's ambitions for Brussels and to acquire a colony were inextricably linked and he was only able to realise a number of projects in Brussels from 1896 onwards when the Congo Free State began to make a profit as the capitalist enterprise

it actually was. Leopold II transformed Brussels into the colonial capital of what, from 1908 onwards, would become a colonial empire.

Alongside his position as king, Leopold II was an entrepreneur and businessman. When the Belgian state was unwilling to acquire a colony or finance his plans to beautify the capital, he turned to capitalist enterprises to achieve his goals. In Brussels, these took the form of front companies such as the *Compagnie Immobilière de Belgique* and its subsidiary, the *Société Anonyme du parc de Saint-Gilles*.

Leopold's transformation of Brussels was the imperial face in the metropolis that was the headquarters of the colonial undertaking in Congo (Vander Elst 2018). Besides the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, the triumphal arch in the Parc du Cinquantenaire in Brussels and the Royal Greenhouses in Laeken (see below) are the largest colonial monuments in Belgium.

In 1900, Leopold II decided to donate the numerous lands and buildings he had acquired to Belgium. There were three conditions attached: they were not to be sold, some were to retain their original function and appearance and they were to be at the disposal of the heirs to the throne. The heritage that was brought together under this Royal Donation can be subdivided into four categories. In this case, we will limit ourselves to the heritage that is located within the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region and is associated with colonial enrichment:

- crown properties that are available to the royal family:
    - outbuildings of the Royal Castle in Laeken: Leopold II built it and expanded it after a fire (1890-1912);
    - the Royal Greenhouses in Laeken: built between 1886 and 1888 before the Congo Free State became profitable, they included a Congo greenhouse that Leopold II wanted to fill with plants from Congo basin; when it became apparent that tropical plants could not grow in greenhouses, they were largely replaced with subtropical plants;
    - the Stuyvenberg Castle in Laeken: Leopold II acquired it in 1889 through a front man;
- buildings serving third parties:
    - the building of the current BELvue Museum in Brussels: in 1902, Leopold II purchased a building adjacent to the Royal Palace in Brussels which housed a hotel;
- public domains and buildings:
    - the Japanese Tower in Laeken (1901-1904);
    - the Chinese Pavilion in Laeken (1901-1903);
    - the Parc Elisabeth in Koekelberg: its construction by Leopold II in 1880 was part of a larger project that was never realised;
    - the Parc Duden in Forest: in 1895 Guillaume Duden donated the park to King Leopold II. It became public in 1912 and was classified in 1973;
- leased domains and buildings:
    - Narafi Castle in Forest (nowadays a campus of LUCA School of Arts): the castle was built in 1906 by Leopold II for the School of Tropical Diseases, the first Tropical Institute in Belgium, which moved to Antwerp in 1931;
    - The ponds of Boitsfort: Leopold II bought the land at the end of the 19th century;

- *Bruxelles Royal Yacht Club* in Laeken: Leopold II wanted to create a home port in the Brussels outer harbour for his private yacht, the *Alberta,* which however never came to Brussels so that the location fitted out to accommodate it was ultimately leased to the *Yachting Club de Bruxelles* which was founded in 1906 and which is a tenant of it to this day.

3.3.2.2. Brussels and Léopoldville (the present-day Kinshasa) – linked colonial cities

Belgians introduced European building styles and techniques in the Congo, particularly art nouveau, art deco, and modernism, and they also made use of industrial iron and concrete structures, urban planning models and completed infrastructural projects there. In many ways, European cities served as models for the construction of cities in Belgian Congo. In contrast, the spatial segregation between the '*ville européenne'* and '*cités indigènes'* in cities such as Léopoldville was modelled on a broader, but not always applied, practice encountered within the colonial urbanism of the colonial empires of various European nations.

Countless references and connections exist between Brussels, the capital of Belgium and Belgian Africa, and Léopoldville, the capital of Belgian Congo that was named after Leopold II, both in the form of monuments and buildings in the public realm, as well as through the intervention of architects, developers, and other actors responsible for the production of the urban fabric. In 1923, for example, a replica of the Manneken Pis statue was placed in the Parc Fernand de Bock in Léopoldville, which was located in the 'neutral zone' that separated the European city from the Congolese *cité*. It was a gift from an Italian resident of the capital. In 1928, a replica of the equestrian statue of Leopold II in the Place du Trône in Brussels was inaugurated in the Place du Trône in the centre of Léopoldville (then known as Kalina, but nowadays called Gombe). In 1956, the new Governor General's residence was built opposite the statue. The prize for its construction was won by Brussels architect, Marcel Lambrichs. The design of the building was clearly inspired by the Palace in Laeken and the then Museum of Belgian Congo in Tervuren. The Governor General never took up residence in the building, however. In 1960, the independence celebrations took place there. Afterwards, the building housed the *Palais de la Nation,* the country's seat of parliament, until 1997. Since 2001, it has served as the official office of the Congolese head of state.

Among other things, Lambrichs designed the head office of the Caisse générale d'epargne et de retraite (CGER) and was part of the association of architects who developed the Finance Tower in Brussels City, along with Brussels architect Georges Ricquier, among others. In his urban plan for Léopoldville (1948-1950), Ricquier applied the same combination of monumental buildings along urban axes that he had also applied in a 1944 project for the redevelopment of the North-South connection in Brussels in which he was involved, with the important difference that his plans for Léopoldville were based on racial segregation. He also designed office buildings in Brussels and the palace of Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi for the 1958 World's Fair at the Heysel in Brussels.

The Royal Library on the Mont des Arts forms one of the monumental building complexes at that location. The creation of the Mont des Arts was one of the large-scale urban planning projects of the late 19th to the mid-20th century that gave effect to the expansion

of Brussels as an imperial capital, as envisioned by Leopold II. In order to construct the Mont des Arts, the St. Roch neighbourhood was razed to the ground. The Royal Library was designed by the Brussels architect Maurice Houyoux, who was chief architect for the seven pavilions of the Belgian Colonial Section at the 1958 World's Fair and whose designs in Belgian Congo included buildings for the Bank of Belgian Congo in Léopoldville, Stanleyville (now Kisangani) and Costermansville (now Bukavu). These are just a few examples of the connectedness that existed between the development of architecture and urbanism in Belgium and in its colony.

The other buildings on the Mont des Arts were designed by the Brussels architect Jules Ghobert. The bell of the carillon at the Palais des Congrès on the Mont des Arts features male characters said to be representative of Belgium: eleven Belgian historical characters (Jacob Van Artevelde, Godfrey de Bouillon, Philip the Good, the Count of Egmont, Emperor Charles V and Jean-Joseph Charlier), three unknown Belgians (a Gaul, a soldier and a workman) and a Congolese (a 'tam-tam player') (cf. *Section 4.4.3*.). The Palais des Congrès hosted the Political and Economic Roundtables held in 1960 to prepare for Congo's independence.

3.3.3. Neighbourhoods

These may be neighbourhoods that were or are characterised by a concentration of activities, as in Brussels:

- The Quartier Royale from which Congo was governed from 1885 to 1960 and Rwanda and Burundi from 1916 to 1962, and which was the economic powerhouse of the colonial economy;
- the market on the Place Sainte-Catherine, where Congolese first sold carabouya candy and the surrounding streets where many of them lived in the early 20th century;
- Matonge, the centre of commerce and night-life for many persons of Sub-Saharan African descent in Ixelles;
- The Sablon neighbourhood in Brussels City where the trade in classical African art has been concentrated since colonial times: thanks to the proximity of the museum in Tervuren, Brussels became the leading art market for classical African art, after New York and Paris;
- The Port neighbourhood around Tour & Taxis in Brussels City where colonial goods were imported via rail lines, the port and customs services (the *Gare Maritime* was the largest freight station in Europe) which were processed in nearby companies.

These neighbourhoods also feature that have played a role in colonial history or in the presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgium since colonial times;

Elsewhere in Belgium, a number of neighbourhoods were also given names that demonstrate the colonial view of Congo, such as:

- The Congo neighbourhood in Sint-Gillis-Waas, so called because of the shabby houses;
- The Congo neighbourhood in the Muide in Ghent that takes its name from its allegedly 'backward' population.

A neighbourhood name such as the Matadiwijk, a garden suburb in Heverlee (Leuven), has no similar negative connotation.

There are also neighbourhoods built by and around companies with interests in Congo: one example is the cité near the Union Minière factory in Olen, about which Walter Van den Broeck wrote in his novel *Brief aan Boudewijn* (*Letter to Baudouin*).

3.3.4. Sites

These include, amongst others, places where colonial exhibitions and world's fairs were organised, such as the museum site in Tervuren and the Heysel in Laeken.

Some buildings erected for temporary exhibitions remained standing, and sculptures may have been given a permanent place in the public realm. This was the case for the building now known as the Africa Palace (formerly known as the Palace of the Colonies) in Tervuren that Leopold II had built for a colonial exhibition in 1897 and for the statue of the elephant located opposite the current museum building on the same site, which originally stood at the World's Fair in Brussels in 1935. On the Rue du Heysel in Laeken not long before the 1958 World's Fair, a number of buildings were expropriated to make way for the tropical gardens of the section devoted to Belgian Congo. In 1958, the *Centre d'Accueil du Personnel africain* (CAPA) was built on the museum site in Tervuren to house the Congolese, Rwandans and Burundian who worked or were exhibited at the World's Fair in the Heysel neighbourhood. On the site of that prefabricated building, a new one was constructed during the 1970s, also called CAPA, which houses, among other things, scientific services, so-called ethnographic collections and the central library of the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

3.3.5. Infrastructure

An example is the Sobieski Bridge or Colonial Bridge in Laeken bearing the monogram and crown of Leopold II, a monumental column with bronze base, ring and knob capital made by the *Compagnie des Bronzes*, with a vertical pillar in red granite previously adorned by the 'Star of the Congo'.

Viewed from a broader perspective, a great deal of transportation and industrial infrastructure forms part of an infrastructural apparatus that supported colonial exploitation and domination.

3.3.6. Plants, parks, greenhouses and gardens

The public space formed by parks and gardens in the Brussels-Capital Region is also marked by colonial traces.

The Parc du Cinquantenaire is inextricably linked to one of the major urban axes that runs through it, from the Rue de la Loi to Tervuren Park. The Parc du Cinquantenaire and Centenary Arch work closely together on a visual level. In the Parc du Cinquantenaire are a number of colonial monuments that are clearly recognisable (cf. *Section 4.3.1.2.*).

In the early 20th century, the site of the Colonial Garden in Laeken contained greenhouses for the cultivation of tropical crops, grains and plants. Those greenhouses were dismantled in 1962 and replaced with lawn and the garden was transformed into a park that has been open to the public since 1965.

The Parc Brugmann was created by Georges Brugmann who, in 1878, was a member of the *Comité du Haut-Congo* that funded Henry Morton Stanley's expeditions. Together with Albert Thys, he was a co-founder of the *Compagnie du Congo et de l'Industrie* (1886). He became a major shareholder in the *Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo* (1887) and transformed large parts of Uccle and parts of Saint-Gilles and Forest by creating avenues and parks.

The *Acer pseudoplatanus* L. var. 'Leopoldii' is a maple tree that was named after Leopold II. In 2019, the Flemish Roads and Traffic Agency decided to plant 600 of these maples between the Vierarmenkruispunt (Quatre Bras) and the Jazzfontein (Jazz fountain) traffic circle in front of the Africa Palace on the museum site in Tervuren without consulting the museum (cf. *Chapter 1*).

A more familiar example involves the *Sansevieria trifasciata* Prain var. 'laurentii' (known in Flanders as 'women's tongues'), the variety with the golden-yellow leaf margin of which Emile Laurent, professor of agronomy in Gembloux, brought two shoots from Congo to Belgium at the beginning of the 20th century. Its sturdy fibres were used in Congo for weaving or making bows and arrows. This prompted Emile De Wildeman of the National Botanic Garden in Meise, where one of the two shoots ended up (the other was for the Royal Greenhouses), to consider whether the plant could be commercialised, as had been the case of wild rubber from Congo. Instead, it became one of the most popular house plants in Belgium.

Oral lore has it that the plant owes its ubiquity to its ability to survive without water for weeks on end, which is why Belgian (Flemish) Catholic missionaries brought the plant to Belgium as a gift to promote their missionary work in Belgian Congo.

3.3.7. Toponymy

This concerns the names of streets, avenues, parks, squares, gardens, tunnels, buildings, bus and tram stops and metro stations. The names of bus and tram stops and metro stations in Brussels include Vétérans Coloniaux/Koloniale Veteranen, Leopold II, Livingstone, Pétillon (named after Arthur, not Léon, Pétillon), Thieffry, Thys and Matonge.

In the Brussels-Capital Region, more than 60 names of avenues, squares and streets are said to refer to Belgium's colonial past (in Flanders 76 and in Wallonia 54). In Brussels, the names, in order of appearance, are those of (i) soldiers, (ii) locations in former Belgian Africa, (iii) various individuals, (iv) 'explorers' and agents of the Congo Free State, (v) politicians and diplomats, (vi) Leopold II and priests, (vii) battles and references to Belgium as a colonial power (Kesteloot 2021). None of those public places is named after a woman (Stanard 2019: 150).

Most were named after individuals who were active in the Congo Free State. Rather exceptionally, streets are named after individuals who were involved in the Belgian colonisation of the Congo, such as Omer Lepreux (the Rue Omer Lepreux in Koekelberg)

or General Tombeur (the Rue Général Tombeur in Etterbeek). In the Brussels-Capital Region, there is no street that refers to Burundi and only Etterbeek has a street bearing the name Rue du Ruanda.

Street names combine a practical function (an address) with a symbolic one, but a new name does not get in the way of that practical function. Because of their visual impact, it is not surprising that statues and monuments in particular are the focus of debate, but the impact of street names on the daily lives of many residents of a municipality is possibly greater.

In the absence of additional information, it is not always clear to residents or passers-by that the individuals in question played a role in colonial history. In a number of cases, streets were also named after people for meritorious activities that had nothing to do with their colonial past, such as in the case of the Boulevard Général Jacques in Etterbeek (cf. *Section 4.3.2.1*).

In 1960, the proposal to rename the Rue des Colonies in Brussels City was put forward, but nothing came of it. Throughout Belgium, new or renewed names of streets, squares, etc. are chosen by municipal councils. In the Brussels-Capital Region, the municipalities request a favourable opinion from the Royal Commission on Toponymy & Dialectology when they wish to rename a street, but that opinion is non-binding.

3.3.8. Buildings

FIG. 11. The Ministry of Colonies was located from the mid-1920s to the early 1960s in the Hôtel de Flandre on the Place Royale. This photo ca. 1953, originates from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (taken from Van de Maele en Lagae, 2017)

Buildings can count as traces of the colonial past for many reasons and those reasons may apply either separately or simultaneously. When associating buildings with colonialism, it is not appropriate to connect colonial significance exclusively or predominantly to buildings constructed in a late Beaux-Arts, an art nouveau or an art deco style, or to buildings that are *fifties* modernist in style. The examples below show

that all the styles that were current in architectural practice at any given time also lent themselves to buildings used to accommodate colonial activities, in a broad sense of the term.

3.3.8.1. Buildings that have played a role in colonial history and in the history of the Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian presence in Belgium

Often these are buildings that do not visually display their colonial historical significance in the city. This is a very broad category that overlaps with others. For example, it includes:

- administrative buildings in the Quartier Royale, such as the former headquarters of the Congo Free State (Rue Brederode 10) with the Stars of Congo on its façade, or the building on the Place Royale that nowadays houses the Constitutional Court, but which between 1925 and 1960 housed the administration of the Ministry of Colonies and as far its exterior is concerned, contains no elements that are reminiscent of that;
- the buildings of colonial associations and clubs;
- the buildings of banks, factories and companies with commercial interests in Congo, Rwanda and/or Burundi: for example, the headquarters of the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* (UMHK) and other operating companies (Colmines, BCK, Cofoka) on the Rue Montagne du Parc; the Lever House, headquarters of the *Huileries du Congo Belge* (cf. *Section 4.3.3.1*); the building of the *Banque Industrielle Belge* by Edouard Empain (whose initials, along with the Star of Congo are visible on the façades) on the Place de la Liberté; the building of the *Compagnie du Kasaï*, which still bears the initials CK; the building of the *Compagnie Minière des Grands Lacs Africains*.
- buildings constructed for colonial exhibitions or where exhibitions linked to African art have been held, such as the Palais des Beaux-Arts (better known today as Bozar) where the *Art Nègre* exhibition took place in 1930, and where objects from the Royal Museum of Belgian Congo were also exhibited. Henry Le Boeuf, who initiated the construction of the building, was the son-in-law of Albert Thys and made a career at the *Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie* and at the *Banque d'Outremer* which Thys had founded. The building was designed by Victor Horta, who had done his apprenticeship with Alphonse Balat, who in turn had built the Royal Greenhouses in Laeken. Congolese rubber was used to dampen sound in the halls and to cover the floor.
- In 1920, the Belgian Senate hosted the assizes of the first National Colonial Congress in which the war veteran and activist Paul Panda Farnana (cf. *Chapter 1*) and Stephane Kaoze, the first Congolese to be ordained a priest, participated;
- the Janlet Wing of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences was built during the reign of Leopold II; there is a bust of him at the former entrance. The institute preserves many collections from the Congo;
- the café on the Grand Place in Brussels City where the *Midis du Congo* were organised from the late 1950s onwards;
- the Egmont Palace where the first congress against colonialism and imperialism was held in 1927;
- Hotel Plaza in Brussels City where the Congolese delegation of the Political Roundtable stayed from 20 January to 20 February 1960, and where the Congolese

orchestra *African Jazz* played on the fringes of the Roundtable and, among other things, presented the song *Indépendance Cha Cha* for the first time.

- reception homes for African students, such as the *Maison africaine* founded on the Rue Traversière in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode in 1958, a reception home for girls at Place Loix 20 in Saint-Gilles, a Catholic reception home at Chaussée de Vleurgat 1 in Ixelles, a Protestant reception home on the Avenue Coghen in Uccle, etc.
- archives and museums with colonial collections;
- mission congregations, such as the Scheut Mission House in Anderlecht;
- the Palais des Congrès on the Mont des Arts in Brussels City where the Political and Economic Roundtables in preparation for Congolese independence were organised;

3.3.8.2. Buildings associated with individuals who played a role in colonial history

This too is a very broad category that overlaps with others. For example, it includes the residences of slave traders (cf. *Section 3.3.1.*), of a high official of Congo Free State such as Edmond van Eetvelde (cf. *Section 4.3.3.2.*), or the house in Tienen, in which the soldier Emile Wangermée was born.

3.3.8.3. Buildings using Congolese materials such as wood and ivory

Although Leopold II had a preference for a late neoclassical style, he called on promising young art nouveau artists such as Paul Hankar, Georges Hobé, Gustave Serrurier-Bovy and Henry Van de Velde for the decoration and presentation of the colonial exhibition at the then Palace of the Colonies in Tervuren in 1897, on the recommendation of Baron Edmond van Eetvelde, Secretary of State of the Congo Free State. Also on display, in addition to stuffed animals, soil samples, Congolese and European economic products including Congolese rubber, and Congolese material objects, were works of art by Belgian artists, including chryselephantine sculptures made of ivory and gold. With more than one million visitors, it was possibly the most successful exhibition that ever took place in Belgian history. The art nouveau interior architecture with its Congolese wood and the chyselephantine sculptures that were part of Leopold II's colonial propaganda made such an impression on the many visitors that they were called *Style Congo* (Congo style). Between 1895 and 1898, Van Eetvelde had a house built for himself in Brussels by Victor Horta which, with its use of Congolese mahogany, also functioned as a colonial propaganda tool. Other art nouveau architects used little Congolese wood. With the invention of veneers, Art déco architects made greater use of it.

Due to its great success, the Palace of the Colonies became the *Musée du Congo* in 1898, but due to a lack of space, it was decided to build a new museum in 1902. Known nowadays as the Royal Museum for Central Africa, it was inaugurated as the Museum of Belgian Congo in 1910, a year after Leopold II's death, by his successor Albert I. The Palace of the Colonies fell into disrepair and the decor and furniture steadily disappeared, partly as a result of the presence of troops during World War II. Only a limited number of pieces were recovered. During the 1970s after an exchange, they ended up at the Royal Museum of Art and History in Brussels, where they will be on display in the new art nouveau and art deco galleries from 2023 onwards.

3.3.8.4. Buildings with external visual elements that contain references to colonial activities or representations of Sub-Saharan Africans

In Brussels City, for example, this includes an apartment building (which originally included fruit depots on the ground floor) on the corner of Rue Antoine Dansaert and the Rue du Vieux Marché aux Grains. The art deco building, designed by the architect Eugène Dhuicque, was built in 1927 by the firm Gérard Koninck Frères (GKF). The enamelled sandstone friezes containing depictions of bananas refer to the bananas that the firm imported from the Congo. GKF built other commercial and apartment buildings in the neighbourhood, such as the art deco building at Boulevard d'Ypres 34-36, with its gilded capitals showing ornaments of exotic fruit.

Numerous private or public buildings contain visual references to colonial themes in their interiors, without, therefore, being perceptible in the city by observing their exteriors. Examples of this include the Africanesque sculptures in the entrance hall of the Lever House (cf. *Section 4.3.3.1*), and the gilded reliefs representing an imaginary Congo on the walls of the El Dorado room in the UGC cinema on the Place de Brouckère.

3.3.8.5. Buildings whose names refer to colonial history

In Brussels, for example, this concerns older buildings such as the *Palais du Congo* at Avenue du Congo 2-4 in Ixelles and the *Hôtel des Colonies* at Rue des Croisades 6-10 in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, and includes, in more recent times, the *Stanley Grill* restaurant at Boulevard d'Anvers 47, the restaurant Kasaï at Avenue Dailly 211 and the *Tabora* chip shops at the Porte d'Anvers and at Rue de Tabora 2, all four in Brussels City.

3.3.8.6. Vanished buildings

Amongst others, the examples in Brussels include

- The *Panopticum de Maurice Castan* on the Place de la Monnaie, and later the *Musée du Nord* where human zoos were organised during the second half of the 19th century (cf. *Section 1.2.1.1*.);
- The Hotel Verviers at Boulevard Emile Jacqmain 77, where the first Congolese association of 1919, the *Union Congolaise, Société de Secours et de Développement Moral et Intellectuel de la Race Congolaise*, had its premises;
- The two buildings (one from 1958, the other from 1961) that housed the *Centre International*, a satellite house of *Présence Africaine* in Paris, and where Alioune Diop and Léopold Sédar Senghor (Senegal), Richard Wright (U.S.A.), Aimé Césaire and Edouard Glissant (French Antilles), Jacques Rabemananjara (Madagascar) and prominent Congolese, among others, gave lectures. The Centre also played an important role in the Roundtable discussions;
- The Hecq store in the Rue des Colonies in Brussels City, where visitors and generations of Belgians who lived and/or worked in Belgian Africa shopped before travelling to sub-Saharan Africa; it closed its doors in 1992.

3.3.9. Intentional colonial commemorative signs

Other than buildings and toponymy which are functional, intentional busts, memorial stones, graves, commemorative plaques (on trees or walls), monuments, statues and memorials have a purely symbolic function: they serve only to place an event or person literally and figuratively on a pedestal. Unlike street names, they can therefore become the object of tributes, official celebrations and become 'places of pilgrimage' for the retrieval of public and personal memories about events, historical periods or persons. This now happens less frequently in Belgium than used to be the case, at least in Brussels; but in Blankenberge, civil and military authorities still pay tribute to the statue of Joseph Lippens and Henri De Bruyne every year, although this is increasingly contested.

About 20% of all colonial monuments are located in Brussels, half in Wallonia, and one third in Flanders (Stanard 2011: 179). They were all made by men. Compared to statues that make themselves seen by their monumentality and street names that are present by their use as addresses, plaques are often less conspicuous. There are said to be dozens of colonial plaques hanging in Belgium (Stanard 2011: 184), but unlike in the case with statues and street names, no-one has ever attempted to inventory them. Many plaques are protected.

The only tombs of which the Working Group is aware are that of Hubert Lothaire in the cemetery of Ixelles, which contains a eulogy of Albert I, and that of Francis Dhanis in the cemetery of Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, which bears the inscription '*héros de la campagne arabe au Congo*'. There are undoubtedly other tombstones of former colonials in the Brussels region, with or without mention of their activities in Belgian colonial Africa, but as far as the Working Group knows, there is no systematic overview of these.

3.3.9.1. When were intentional colonial memorials created?

During Leopold II's reign over the Congo Free State, a dozen colonial statues were erected in public space in Belgium, but not one of those is located in the Brussels-Capital Region (Stanard 2011: 167).

However, the colonisation of Congo by Leopold II (1885-1908) and, to a lesser extent, by Belgium (1908-1960), Belgium's administration of Ruanda-Urundi as a mandate area (1924-1947) and as a trust area (1947-1962) were commemorated as part of Belgian national history mainly during the interwar period and after World War II.

The period after World War I was characterised by a new wave of patriotism. In that context, Leopold II, who was unpopular during his lifetime (not only because of his reign of terror in Congo), became the object of a cult as the 'visionary genius' who had 'given' Belgium a colony. Following the many monuments erected to commemorate Belgians who had died during World War I, veterans, municipalities and colonial lobby groups took the initiative to create statues and plaques commemorating Belgian 'pioneers' who had died in Congo during the period 1876-1908 (*ibid.*: 182). During the interwar period, the *Ligue du Souvenir Congolais/Bond van het Congoleesch Aandenken* and the *Vétérans coloniaux/Colonial Veterans* in particular promoted their creation. Between 1929 and 1930, this association, which was founded in 1929 under the patronage of Albert I, made a list of all Belgians who had died in Congo between 1876 and 1908 with the aim of

commemorating them in the municipality from which they came. It sent out lists to 500 cities and villages (*ibid.*: 183). Nine monuments were built between 1925 and 1929. That number increased to 47 between 1930 and 1940 (*ibid.*: 179).

After World War II, when Belgium was divided by the Royal Question, Leopold II served as the figurehead of the monarchy (Stanard 2011: 198). Before 1906, there were four statues of Leopold II in public space (in Ekeren, Rixensart, Forest and Leuven), during the interwar period another four were added (in Brussels, Namur, Audergem and Ostend), followed by five (Arlon, Halle, Ghent, Mons and Hasselt) and one relief (Sint-Truiden) in post-war period. During that period, in a context of political decolonisation, the Ministry of Colonies contributed to the financing of colonial monuments for the first time, in an attempt to strengthen its colonisation of Belgian Africa (*ibid.*: 185).

Monuments referring to the colonial period were also erected after 1960: the *Monument to the Troops of the African Campaigns* in Schaerbeek in 1970, and three statues of Leopold II: one in Ixelles in 1969, one in Ostend in 1986 and one in Tervuren Park in 1997.

The statue commemorating General Tombeur in Saint-Gilles is the only one that indirectly refers to Rwanda and Burundi: after Tombeur's victory over the Germans in Tabora (present-day Tanzania) in 1916, Belgium administered Rwanda-Urundi from 1922 to 1947 as a mandate area and then, until 1962, as a trust area for the United Nations.

Because colonial memorials and monuments were not created on the basis of a democratic survey, they de facto never reflected the diverse and differing opinions of the population as a whole. This does not alter the fact that ordinary citizens often contributed towards the costs necessary to finance colonial monuments (*ibid.*: 172-173). The inauguration of colonial statues often led to commemorations of colonisation that transcended class differences (*ibid.*: 171).

The importance that Belgians attached to colonial monuments is evidenced by the fact that a number of monuments destroyed by Germans during the two World Wars were replaced in peacetime, including the bronze bust of Lieutenant General Emile Storms that was installed in 1906, removed by the Germans in 1943, and replaced after World War II with the current stone bust on the Square De Meeûs in Ixelles (*ibid.*: 170). A number of other statues, incidentally, were also moved, rather than removed: the statue of Louis-Napoléon Chaltin was probably moved from Uccle to its current location in Ixelles (Stanard 2019: 152); the statue of Louis Crespel moved no fewer than four times, albeit always within the municipality of Ixelles (*ibid.*: 153).

3.3.9.2. Classification of colonial commemorative signs

Most colonial statues refer to persons rather than events. It is necessary to distinguish between allegorical images and effigies of the person being commemorated. Some, like the monument to General Albert Thys in the Parc du Cinquantenaire in Brussels, combine both elements. While allegories are not always easy to read for a contemporary audience, statues, busts, and plaques were generally erected as unambiguous, clearly readable symbols: whether or not they included an accompanying text that could, in addition to biographical data about the person(s) depicted, also convey a message about

what he/she had done in the Congo, their message was supposed to be unambiguous and immediately obvious to any passer-by. Their strength, according to the standards of the time in which they were erected, lay in the fact that they were open to only one interpretation and made further explanation unnecessary.

Throughout time, colonial statues favoured the actions of white, male actors and the absence of white women as historical actors is striking. In Brussels, no woman is commemorated for her role in Belgian Africa. At most, women figure allegorically, as on the monument to General Albert Thys in the Parc du Cinquantenaire in Brussels.

In Brussels, only men who were active in the Congo Free State are commemorated, with the exception of the statue of Edmond Thieffry, the pilot who undertook the first flight from Belgium to Congo in 1925, which was erected in Etterbeek in 1932.

After the takeover of Congo by Belgium, colonial statues, whether figurative or allegorical, continued to refer exclusively to the actions of white men, and with a few exceptions (such as Father Constant De Deken in Wilrijk), it concerned (1) soldiers glorified as ‘pioneers’, heroes' and/or their 'civilizing mission' for which they may or may not have lost their lives in the Congo Free State, (2) soldiers who won battles in Africa during the First World War and (3) non-military personnel honoured because of their 'civilising mission', such as Albert Thys who built railways (Stanard 2011: 189).

Despite the fact that most colonial intentional memorials primarily commemorate individuals, there are also prominent monuments that evoke themes such as the Belgian colonisation as such, the so-called 'civilizing mission', or the local veneration of ‘pioneers’ from a particular municipality as well. Examples include the *Monument to the Belgian pioneers in Congo* in the Parc du Cinquantenaire (cf. *Section 4.3.1.2.7.*) and the *Monument to the Colonial Pioneers of Ixelles* (cf. *Section 4.3.1.4*.).

3.3.9.3. Protest

Internationally, figurative statues are most often the object of iconoclasm and Belgium is no exception. In Brussels, the triumphal arch in the Parc du Cinquantenaire elicits less resistance than the equestrian statue of Leopold II in the Place du Trône. One might question the fact that colonial monuments commemorate only Belgians who died in the Congo, while there is not a single monument in Belgium that commemorates the millions of victims of Leopold II's reign of terror.

Many colonial statues are protected. If they are ~~vandalised~~, they will be restored. That did not happen with the severed hand of the equestrian statue of Leopold II on the dike in Ostend, with the statue of Leopold II in Ekeren that was taken away to the Middelheim Museum or with the bust of Leopold II in Ghent that may be transferred to the city museum STAM. This is the first time that statues have been removed from public space in Belgium because they are no longer considered consistent with the ways in which people want to remember certain historical figures or events.

3.3.9.3.1. Visible traces of protest of intentional colonial memorials

Graffiti or paint are the most common visible traces, but new sculptures can equally be created such as the bust of Leopold II in Parc Duden in bird seed and existing statues can be replaced or made to disappear.

3.3.10. Artworks in the public realm

The boundaries between the types of artworks that fit under this heading are not always clear:

- Works of art from before the colonial period, for example the statue of St. Nicholas accompanied by an African boy in the Impasse Saint-Nicolas in the centre of Brussels;
- Colonial artworks
    - which were clearly made for the sake of colonial propaganda, such as chryselephantine statues made of ivory and gold;
    - classified under the heading of 'Africanism' (cf. *Section 3.3.11.7.1.*), which represent Congolese people, cultures and landscapes in a particular way that are part of museum collections or stand in a public space, such as the statue of an archer by Arthur Dupagne and therefore come close to resembling colonial propaganda (cf. *Section 4.4.2*).
- Postcolonial artworks created by Sub-Saharan African artists that are not necessarily free from criticism by Belgians of Sub-Saharan African origin, such as:
    - the fresco *Porte de Namur, porte de l'amour?* by Cheri Samba on the Chaussée d'Ixelles in Ixelles;
    - the statue *Au delà de l'espoir* by Freddy Tsimba on the Chaussée de Wavre in Ixelles;
    - a scan of a photograph of an unidentified Congolese photographer on a window of the café-restaurant *L'Horloge du Sud* in Ixelles;
    - the installation *Selfie City* by Sammy Baloji on the shop windows of a hairdresser shop in the Galerie Porte de Namur in Ixelles;
    - murals by Novadead in Brussels, Laeken and Liege;
    - the *sculpture Centres fermés, esprits ouverts* (Closed centres, open spirits) by Freddy Tsimba on a side wall in the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren.
- Art by artists of non-African descent that
    - depicts Sub-Saharan African persons in a way that has clear colonial connotations, such as:
        - a 1988 mural featuring characters from Tintin's 22 albums, including the leopard man, in Stockel metro station;
        - the statue *Runaway slaves attacked by dogs* on the Avenue Louise in Ixelles (cf. *Section 4.4.1.*);
        - The two sculptures in Africanist style of a Sub-Saharan African man and woman at Avenue Louise 197 in Ixelles (the building dates from 1968 and housed the antique store *l'Ecuyer,* however the Working Group has no information about the sculptor).
    - affords dignity to Sub-Saharan African persons, such as:
        - the fresco *Upright Men (Les Hommes Debout)* by Bruce Clarke on a wall at the junction of the Rue du Meiboom and Rue de l'Ommegang in Brussels-City, which commemorates the genocide in Rwanda that forms part of the PARCOURS Street ART by the City of Brussels.

The line between art and colonial propaganda is not always easy to draw, not least because art could be used for the sake of propaganda purposes.

3.3.11. Museum collections

The colonial traces preserved and/or exhibited inside public museums do not strictly speaking belong to the urban public space, but they do form part of the public sphere of the capital. We also discuss them here because these institutions, their collections and archives can play a key role in bringing an updated, decolonial and multi-voiced history of Belgium's colonial past, interacting with the monumental representations of this history and the marked colonial urban heritage that exists in the public realm. This assumes an active decolonial policy that is not limited to the contextualisation of statues, busts, plaques, etc. that may eventually end up in museum collections, but also takes into account a Human Resource policy, especially as far as curators, collection management, exhibition programming and cooperation with external curators from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi/of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian origin, etc. are concerned.

Below, we will provide an incomplete overview of the collections (and sometimes of their displays) of museums in the Brussels-Capital Region, but we will also refer to Belgian museums elsewhere, not least the Royal Museum for Central Africa, which has the largest collections from Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as a large number of archives. There is a tendency in Belgium to reduce decolonising of museums to decolonisting this former colonial institution, when in reality it also concerns a large number of other museums, including in Brussels.

3.3.11.1. Classical art from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi

As a result of the Belgian colonisation of the Congo, the Royal Museum for Central Africa preserves the largest collection of Congolese material culture in the world. It also preserves smaller collections from Rwanda and Burundi. The MAS in Antwerp, the *Musée Royal de Mariemont*, the *Musée Africain de Namur*, and the university museums of Ghent and Louvain-la-Neuve, among others, also hold collections of classical art from the Congo. The Museum of Musical Instruments (MIM) in Brussels preserves a collection of musical instruments from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi.

3.3.11.2. Contemporary art from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi

Contemporary art is much less represented in public collections: the RMCA preserves the largest collection, mainly from Congo. The Royal Library has the largest collection of the first Congolese, even African watercolours in the world, which were produced by Albert and Antoinette Lubaki, Tshyela Ntendu and N'Goma.

3.3.11.3. Human remains from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi

Among others, the Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Sciences, the ULB, the RMCA and the *Musée Africain de Namur* preserve human remains.

3.3.11.4. Archaeological remains from the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi

The largest collections are preserved at the Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Sciences and the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

3.3.11.5. Biological and geological specimens from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi

The largest collections are preserved at the Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Sciences and the Royal Museum for Central Africa.

3.3.11.6. Representations of Leopold II and colonial symbols integrated into the museum infrastructure

Artworks are basically displayed in museums as contextualised historical or art historical objects, unlike sculptures and paintings in academies, town or town halls, schools, etc. that pay homage to the person represented. However, in some museums, and often the two functions may be merged together, especially in reception and circulation areas:

- in the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren:
    - the ivory bust that was placed centrally on the Star of Congo on the floor of the large rotunda in 1910 and later (the exact year is not known) moved to the storage facility
    - the bronze bust of Leopold II in the courtyard garden that was removed after the museum reopened in 2018;
- at the Royal Museum of Art and History in Brussels: the status of the large equestrian statue of Leopold II that was the model for the equestrian statue in the Place du Trône is ambiguous due to its arrangement and the lack of contextualisation. In 2019, the museum was criticised for showing a photo on Instagram with the comment *"Another Royal Birthday"*.

The Royal Museum for Art and History also preserves a painting, two plaster reliefs of Leopold II, five medallions with a bas-relief and seven plaster models of Leopold II.

There are also statues of Leopold II in the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History, in the Belgian Royal Institute of Natural Sciences and a painting of him hangs in the National Bank.

3.3.11.7. The representation of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgian art

3.3.11.7.1. Africanism

Africanism developed from the second half of the 19th century onwards and was characterised by a colonial image of the people, landscapes and cultures of Africa. It was not a stand-alone artistic movement, but a mode of depiction that could be found in several art movements. It was often used for colonial propaganda that was limited in the ways it portrayed colonial subjects and their lifestyles. With a few exceptions such as Floris Jespers and Luc Peire, we do not find Africanist characteristics in Surrealism and Expressionism, which were the main Belgian art movements of the 20th century.

The Royal Museum for Central Africa preserves an extensive collection of Africanist art. On the occasion of its reopening in 2018, it moved 33 contested Africanist sculptures, including the infamous Leopard Man that had been commissioned by the then Ministry of Colonies for the museum and which conveyed an emphatic, propagandistic message, to a public "repository" in the permanent exhibition. In 2020, artists Aimé Mpane and Jean Pierre Müller, with their artwork *RE-STORE,* covered the protected Africanist colonial sculptures in the large rotunda of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (the last of which was installed in 1965) with curtains featuring images that allow visitors to have a different view of the contested sculptures.

Africanist art is further preserved at the Museum of Ixelles, the *Musée de l'art wallon* in Liège, the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Tournai, at Lever House in Brussels City and at the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp. In 2016, African students complained about a statue depicting a Congolese in the entrance hall of the Institute of Tropical Medicine. The management decided not to remove the sculpture, but wants to use it to highlight its current values and standards by contextualising it and bringing in contemporary art. In 2020, it started a Committee for Decolonisation to look at these kinds of issues.

3.3.11.7.2. Other representations

Congolese mainly figure in Belgian comic strips, such as those by Hergé and Willy Vandersteen, among others. The main collections of comic strips are kept at the Belgian Comic Strip Center in Brussels and at the Hergé Museum in Louvain-la-Neuve.

The Charlier Museum in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode preserves a bronze bust of Paul Panda Farnana, while the Mons Memorial Museum in Mons has one in marble. The use of this type of material, as opposed to plaster, indicates that these busts were made as a tribute to the person in question.

3.3.11.8. Art nouveau objects made for colonial propaganda

Most of the art nouveau objects created by Belgian artists for the colonial exhibition in Tervuren in 1897 are now kept at the Royal Museums of Art and History in the Parc du Cinquantenaire in Brussels. The Fin-de-Siècle Museum of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium does not pay attention to the relations between art nouveau and the Belgian colonisation of the Congo.

3.3.11.9. Art deco art inspired by Congo

The most important collection is preserved at the Royal Museums of Art and History.

Quite a few images depicting Congolese are characterised by art deco elements and many colonial posters were designed in the art deco style. The Royal Library of Belgium and the Royal Museum for Central Africa hold the largest collections of posters.

3.3.11.10. Colonial archives, photos, films and sound recordings

The Royal Museum for Central Africa and the State Archives hold the majority of archives relating to colonial history and the largest collections of colonial photographs (see also Tallier et al. 2021 for a complete overview).

The Royal Museum for Central Africa and Cinematek preserve collections of colonial films. The Royal Museum for Central Africa preserves the largest collection of sound recordings. The CIVA preserves archives of Belgian architects and of some major building contractors such as Blaton, who were active both in Belgium and Belgian Congo. The Royal Library keeps a copy of all books published in Belgium, which therefore includes works published by Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent, but there is no search engine to find them as such.

It is also possible that municipal archives, the archives of public institutions, such as schools and theatres, contain documents, photos and so on that relate to colonial history and/or the presence of Congolese, Burundian and Rwandan people in Belgium.

3.3.11.11. Colonial military objects and uniforms

The Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History holds the largest collection, followed by the Royal Museum for Central Africa. Leopold II's conquest of Congo figures prominently in the permanent exhibition of the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History.

3.3.12. Private buildings and collections

Some private buildings are open to the public, as is the case of the Royal Greenhouses, where a statue of Leopold II is located.

Many private collections, including many of classical African art are not accessible to the public unless the owners (from private individuals to mission congregations) loan them to museums.

3.3.13. Brands and institutions established during the colonial period

These are primarily brands and institutions that are visible in the public realm and whose colonial history is not always well known, such as the beer Stella Artois, which takes its name from the star of Congo Free State. The beer was created when the Leuven brewery Artois-De Hoorn was granted the monopoly to serve beer at the World's Fair in Brussels in 1897. Other examples include the National Lottery, which was established in 1934 as the Colonial Lottery and Leonidas chocolates, which during the colonial period were made with cocoa from Congo (*Côte d'Or's* name refers to cocoa on the former Gold Coast, now Ghana).

3.3.14. Archives and collections held by Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent

In the past, attempts were made to establish an African cultural centre in Brussels, largely inspired by *L'Institut du Monde arabe* in Paris. Currently, initiatives are under way to establish *Black Archives*, for example, such as the ones that already exist in Amsterdam and London, among other places. Existing initiatives include *Café Congo*, a self-sustaining cultural centre in Anderlecht.

CHAPTER 4
TOOLS FOR THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF COLONIAL MEMORIALS AND TRACES IN THE BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION

4.1. Introduction

The idea of decolonising public space is usually reduced to a policy regarding intentional colonial memorials, especially sculptural monuments and toponymy. The working group adopts a much broader analysis that considers such intentional memorials to be the tip of the iceberg. Chapter 3 showed that even without the presence of intentional colonial memorials, Brussels is a colonial city thanks to the presence of many other (non-intentional) colonial traces and the history of the presence of Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian origin that is linked to the colonial past.

The exclusive focus on monuments and toponymy also obscures the actual purpose underlying the debate: decolonising society as a whole, of which decolonising public space is only a part. Contextualising or removing statues will not suffice for Belgium to come to terms with its colonial past and for persons of Sub-Saharan African descent to be treated in all respects as fully-fledged Belgian citizens but the way these monuments are treated is a symbolically important part of this necessary process. Decolonising is a matter for everyone, not just for public authorities in relation to intentional colonial memorials in public space. In any case, the aim is not to erase all colonial traces, but instead to highlight those that refer to the presence of Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian origin or to replace one type of symbol with another. The challenge is not only to identify and analyse colonial traces, but also to identify and address absences and identify and problematise the reality that the Brussels-Capital Region is a colonial and postcolonial city, in terms of of discrimination against residents of Sub-Saharan African descent. This goes back to the colonial past, and its pervasive discourses (in monuments and beyond) are also relevant, for example, to municipalities without (intentional) colonial memorials (cf. *Chapter 2*).

In order to develop a decolonial policy when faced with the various specific colonial memorials and traces, it is first necessary to identify their current social significance and the emotional value attached to them. This will require:

- an in-depth knowledge of the various memorials and other colonial traces in the territory of the Region and its municipalities, in collaboration with different types of experts, from historians and local historians to African associations;
- knowledge of historical Belgian colonial discourses and their myths, the critical conversation about them, and their decolonial problematisation, in relation to memorials and traces;
- An in-depth analysis of specific colonial memorials and traces based on a number of parameters:
    - **What?** What type of colonial memorial or trace is involved? What story does it tell? What does it commemorate and why? Who or what does it represent and why? What is its history?
    - **How?** How does the memorial or other colonial trace make a particular representation? How do we look at it? How do we perceive it? How do we interpret it as a whole and/or in relation to its environment?
    - **History**: Which historical realities does the colonial trace do justice to and which does it obscure or distort?
    - **Who?** Who created and/or designed the colonial trace?

- **Where?** Where is the colonial trace located?
- **When?** When does the colonial trace date from?
- **What is it made of?** What material(s) were used to create the colonial trace? What is the origin of the material?
- **Finance**: Who funded the colonial trace?
- **Legal status**: Is it protected? Is it covered by copyright? Are its surroundings protected...?
- **Why?** What makes the colonial trace controversial or problematic?

This list of questions is not exhaustive, but it at least provides the basis for further analysis in collaboration with various actors. People of Sub-Saharan African descent are privileged partners because, regardless of any academic expertise they may have, they can detect and interpret racist representations more easily as a result of their experiences, compared to people who have not learned to analyse them based on personal or academic experience. **There is no hierarchical relationship between the two types of knowledge, which are learned and not innate.** The decipherment of intentional colonial traces referring to specific persons, events, locations, etc. usually requires a knowledge of colonial history based on written historical literature and oral history.

In this chapter, we will use (some of) the questions above in order to analyse a selection of specific colonial traces, mainly intentional memorials. The selection allows us to cover a certain diversity of colonial traces (although the majority of traces analysed are intentional memorials) and to highlight both some of the most discussed colonial traces and some that are not contested or barely contested at all.

First, however, we will consider some myths of importance when analysing a great many colonial monuments.

4.2. Some myths that intentional colonial memorials regularly refer to

Intentional colonial memorials, like other monuments in the urban landscape, acquired monumental allure through their materialisation, their sculptural and architectural design, and their implementation in the urban environment. They were mainly erected to act, directly or indirectly, as propaganda for the colonisation of the Congo. As such, they relied on one-sided, selective and often downright mendacious interpretations of colonial history – in other words, they were reliant on myths. In doing so, they used figurative and/or allegorical iconography, often supplemented by text(s). But they also acquired their significance as a result of being embedded within the colonial culture in which they were erected: directly or indirectly, they tapped into propagandistic messages about the Congo Free State and Belgian Congo that were often repeated in the public sphere, and with which the Belgian public was well acquainted.

4.2.1. Colonial myths concerning Leopold II

In addition to the plaque in the Parc du Cinquantenaire commemorating the first five Kings of the Belgians (cf. *Section 4.3.1.2.6.*), statues of four Kings of the Belgians exist in the public realm in Brussels: two of Leopold I, one of Albert I, four of Leopold II and four of Baudouin.

Although Leopold II was far from loved during his life and after his death, he subsequently grew to become the symbol of the Belgian monarchy, as well as of the colonisation of the Congo. Colonisation was not always the direct or only reason for the creation of statues of Leopold II in the Brussels public space, but they have a strong colonial connotation. They were erected following the publication of the report of the independent commission of inquiry that Leopold II had set up under pressure in 1904 (see *above*). This deliberate amnesia with regard to historical facts was part of a context of patriotism during the interwar period (the equestrian statue in Brussels City in 1926 and the monument in Auderghem in 1930) and after the Royal Question, when anti-Leopoldists such as Julien Lahaut expressed themselves as Republicans (the bust in the Parc Duden in 1957 and the statue in Ixelles in 1969).

National-colonial propaganda created the myth of Leopold II as the visionary seer who had nobly civilised the giant Congo and then magnanimously gifted it to tiny Belgium, and in his role as a king and patron just as selflessly had beautified the country, and Brussels in particular. This is not consistent with reality, however.

Leopold II legitimised his project to colonise Congo on the grounds that he wanted to end the slave trade by ‘Arabs’ and civilise Congolese .

Until at least 1866, slaves were shipped and traded across the Atlantic, despite the fact that Brazil, as the last country in the Americas, had already banned the slave trade in 1850 (though slavery itself remained legal in Brazil until 1888). However, until the late 1880s, after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, many European trading houses employed enslaved people on the west coast of Africa, including today's Congo. The colonial propaganda did not mention that slave trade. As for the slave trade toward the East Coast of Africa, it also made no mention of the fact that Leopold II organised anti-slavery conferences on the one hand, while on the other hand encouraging slave raids to take possession of persons and enslave them. The Congo Free State also bought freed slaves or forced Congolese political leaders to supply freed slaves. The propaganda is also silent about the fact that in 1887, the Congo Free State appointed the Arabo-Swahili slave trader Tippo Tip (whose real name was Hamid bin Mohammed el Murjebi) as governor of Stanley Falls and entered into contracts with him to supply soldiers and organise raids. Even during the anti-slavery campaign, the Congo Free State supplied him with weapons and ammunition in exchange for ivory (Dewulf & Gysel 2016: 52-53). Only after the end of Tippo Tip's mandate did war break out in 1892 between the Congo Free State and Arabo-Swahili traders, which was settled in favour of the former in 1894.

For Leopold II, the fight against the Arabo-Swahili slave trade and the need to civilise Congo were merely pretexts for exploiting Congo economically; in doing so, the end justified the means. When the Congo Free State began to make profits from around 1886 onwards, it was at the expense of Congolese: an estimated one-third of them lost their

lives as a result of the extremely violent economic exploitation. Leopold II knew about everything and, as an autocrat, bore ultimate responsibility. Only when the pressure became too great did he set up a commission of inquiry in 1904 which, against his expectations, confirmed the findings of the earlier report by the British consul, Roger Casement. Contrary to popular belief, Leopold did not donate Congo to Belgium, but was forced under international pressure to transfer its control to the Belgian state.

On the basis of his profits in Congo, Leopold II built up an enormous fortune, mainly through successful investments, with which he acquired a sizeable real estate portfolio and developed urban plans in Antwerp, Brussels, Ostend and Tervuren, among other places.

The majority of men commemorated with a colonial memorial in the Brussels-Capital Region are military and non-military men who are honoured as pioneers who carried out a 'civilising mission' in the Congo Free State.

The inhabitants of Congo did not allow themselves to be colonised voluntarily: first, some political leaders had a document placed before them that they signed with a cross without realizing that in doing so they were handing over the land of their peoples to Leopold II, after which the country was subjected to military occupation. In the process, resistance was violently suppressed.

Both military and non-military personnel were concerned with the economic exploitation of natural resources and the development of infrastructure (ports, railroads, roads) to transport those resources from Congo to Belgium. In the process, millions of Congolese lost their lives.

Under Leopold II's reign, no healthcare system was developed, but a start was made with the systematic destruction of Congolese cultures that had their own economic, legal, political, religious and social organisation. Catholic missionaries were generally in agreement that Congolese needed to be freed from their cultures and that they lacked the higher mental skills of concentration, creative imagination, reason and reflection, and the ability to think logically and abstractly (Yates 1982). The educational system, which confined itself to providing basic education, was entirely in the hands of Catholic and Protestant missionaries who considered reading, writing, and arithmetic of secondary importance compared to instilling Christian morals and recruiting converts for missionary work. Catholic state boarding schools (‘*colonies scolaires*’) in theory targeted abandoned children, but in practice missionaries also acquired them by coercion to perform forced child labour (Ndoma 1984). Children could be physically and/or sexually abused there.

4.2.2. The myth of 'civilising pioneers' and 'uncivilised' Congolese

The so-called scientific racism that developed from the 19th century onwards was characterised by:

- essentialising groups of people by attributing to them characteristics over which they themselves individually or as a group had no control and which would not change through time and space;

- establishing a hierarchy of different 'human races', with white people at the top and black people at the bottom;
- the idea of an evolutionary model of the development of human cultures that went through the same stages from the least to the most "civilised";
- subscribing to the illusion of the existence of pure 'human races' and cultures;
- activities and other characteristics of a small part of a group being attributed to the group as a whole.

This model was inherently contradictory, in part because over time, the supposedly superior culture of the 'white race' appropriated the legacy of cultures from peoples whose descendants were not considered white (Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Phoenicians, etc.) and during the colonial period could explicitly indulge in (their imagery of) the cultures of colonised peoples, for example in art movements such as Africanism (cf. *Section 3.3.11.7.1.*) and Orientalism.

In a biological sense of course, no different so-called human races exist within the one human species. However, during the 19th century and well into the 20th century, it was assumed, on the basis of 19th-century nationalism, that the various 'races of men' could be divided into peoples distinguished from each other by the combination of common language, culture and territory. In actual fact, however, the reality in overseas colonies was often much more complex and colonisation shaped peoples or ethnic identities in large parts of the world that did not exist as such before colonisation. This was also the case in the Congo Free State and Belgian Congo, as well as in Rwanda and Burundi. European colonisers mistakenly believed that in Sub-Saharan Africa, one could distinguish between so-called original inhabitants and successive waves of immigrants, who would be 'racially' superior to the original inhabitants: 'Pygmies' ('the' Bambuti, 'the' Batwa and 'the' Baka) were said to have lived first in Central Africa, followed by 'Bantus' ('the' Hutu in Ruanda-Urundi and the majority of Congolese) who were in turn followed by 'Hamites' from North Africa ('the' Tutsi in Ruanda-Urundi and peoples such as 'the' Arabs and Mangbetu in Congo) and finally by white European colonisers. In reality, Tutsi and Mangbetu did not originate in North Africa. Moreover, the model relied on a confusion between language, 'race' and people/ethnic group, among others: for example, Bambuti, Batwa and Baka speak the language of their neighbours, which, in many cases, are Bantu languages. Tutsi and Hutu speak Bantu languages, and some so-called 'Bantus' in Congo speak non-Bantu languages. The term 'Arabs' initially referred to peoples who speak Arabic, but the term very quickly came to be used as a quasi-synonym for Muslims, even though the vast majority of Muslims live in countries such as Afghanistan, India, Indonesia, Iran, Turkey, etc. where languages are spoken that are not even closest to Arabic. In West Africa, Muslims speak Bantu languages and non-Bantu languages. In East Africa, including eastern Congo, they mainly speak Swahili, a Bantu language that was heavily influenced by Arabic.

While white Europeans justified colonisation based on the idea that they had a duty to ‘civilise’ lesser or simply ‘uncivilised’ peoples, they also looked down on colonial subjects who had already adopted certain European cultural elements and idealised those who had preserved their supposedly pure cultures as 'noble savages'. We can consider that second tendency as a form of 'imperialist nostalgia' (Rosaldo 1989) inspired by the fact that colonisers, as Belgians, did not benefit from effectively 'civilizing' Sub-Saharan

Africans because doing so would make themselves redundant and therefore cause them to lose their control over the colony and the mandate areas.

At the same time, Congolese, for example, who had converted to Islam from the arrival of Arabo-Swahili during the 19th century, were called 'arabianised' because, according to colonial discourses, 'real' Congolese and 'real' Africans in general could not be Muslims, while, on the other hand, the conversion of sub-Saharan Africans to Christianity was seen as a necessity, even by non-Catholic Belgians, such as the liberal Minister of Colonies, Louis Franck (1918-1924). In reality, Arabs introduced their religion to the African continent almost immediately after the establishment of Islam, not only in North Africa, but also in East and West Africa. In East Africa, this led to new forms of culture on what is called the Swahili Coast, after the language that was primarily spoken there. In Congo, the term 'Arabo-Swahili' refers to the presence of both Arabic- and Swahili-speaking Muslims in the east of the country. Not all of these people were slave traders themselves, of course.

The main dichotomies employed that were also reflected in intentional colonial commemorative signs in Belgium were those between 'civilised' Belgians and 'uncivilised' Congolese and those between 'civilised' Belgians and Arabs who were more 'civilised' than Congolese but were perfidious slave traders. The colonial myth therefore not only reduced the colonisation of Congo to a black and white heroic story in which the 'good guys' prevailed over the 'bad guys', but it also propagated a hierarchical racial discourse that also took on a physical form in memorials.

4.2.3. Racist colonial iconography (visual codes in relation to myths)

The 'racial' and cultural hierarchy that would have existed between white and black people according to colonial ideology could be visualised by means of a number of contrasts and motifs in colonial monuments:

- the high position reserved for white *versus* the low position reserved for black people;
- black people looking up to more highly placed white people;
- the Western or, in the case of allegories, Greek or Roman clothing worn by white people *versus* black people who wear little or no clothing;
- the individualisation of white colonial actors *versus* black people who were presented as 'racial' types;
- white men as actors in colonial history *versus* black people as extras who live not in history but within an enduring tradition:
    - although the need to 'civilise' Congolese was used as a justification for colonisation, they are never presented as even partially 'civilised', let alone as inhabitants of industrial and urban centres;
    - on colonial statues and monuments – unlike in colonial film and photography – Congolese are not even idealised as 'noble savages';
- white individuals *versus* black bodies, in which black women are often reduced to the status of sex objects;
- white people associated with culture *versus* black people and their cultures that are associated with nature (animals, rivers and so on);
- active white people *versus* black people depicted as:

- passive victims of the cruelty of Arabo-Swahili traders or the dogs of slave owners;
- grateful recipients of Belgian 'generosity'.

Like former colonial museums such as the Royal Museum for Central Africa, colonial monuments present Congolese as if colonisation never happened, as if they were still as 'wild' and 'uncivilised' during colonisation as they were before. This is a form of 'imperialist nostalgia' (cf. *Section 4.2.2.*).

The idealisation of Africans as 'wild savages' or as 'noble savages' at best and the absence of empowered Africans wearing Western clothes and living in cities, etc. confirms the view that the 'civilising mission' and therefore colonisation are still needed. Ultimately, the distinction between 'savages' and 'noble savages' was relative in that they were all considered inferior to white colonisers.

The absence of any trace of the wide range of resistance or opposition (boycotts, military resistance, mutiny, new forms of culture, new religious movements, rebellions, strikes, flight, rebellion, revenge, etc.) was to give the impression that Congolese gratefully accepted the economic, legal, military, political, religious and social authority of white colonisers. As such, intentional colonial memorials also draw attention to *what they did not show* and what also deserves a place in the public realm: the historical reality of colonisation in all its diverse and complex dimensions.

4.2.4. A Pantheon of one-dimensional colonial 'heroes'

Most colonial memorials are unequivocal in the sense that they honour people who were known only for what they had done during the colonial period. Exceptions (in the public realm in the Brussels-Capital Region) are Leopold II, General Alphonse Jacques (cf. *Section 4.3.2.1.*) and Alexandre Galopin (cf. *Section 4.3.2.2.*). This means that, except for Leopold II and General Alphonse Jacques, there is little debate about weighing up what they accomplished in addition to their activities in Belgian Africa. This also makes them rather one-dimensional colonial historical 'heroes', and it also makes the problematisation of these individuals more unambiguous than, for example, that of figures such as Britain's Winston Churchill (who is praised for his role during World War II, but is the object of criticism because of his racism against non-white people and his role in the Bengal famine) and India's Mahatma Gandhi (who is remembered as the leader of India's independence, but also as a man who expressed racism against black South Africans during his time in South Africa and for his misogyny). In any case, 19th- and 20th-century monuments venerating individual persons – both colonial and other heroes - did not attempt to show the complexity of such persons, but rather to give the impression that there existed people who are heroes comparable with saints – and are therefore above any criticism. And they present history – including the colonial chapters of Belgium's past – as a discipline consisting of defining individuals, rather than as an interplay of social, geopolitical, technical-scientific and other systems and factors in which different actors play a role.

4.3. Analysis of a number of colonial traces of an intentionally colonial nature

4.3.1. Intentional signs of commemoration

4.3.1.1. The equestrian statue of Leopold II on the Place du Trône in Brussels City

FIG. 12. Monument to Leopold II, place du Trône (Thomas Vinçotte and François Malfait), inaugurated in 1926. (photo: Urban.brussels)

This is the Brussels monument that generates the largest number of negative reactions. As explained above, Leopold II's responsibility for the extreme violence in Congo automatically links this monument to the former colony.

Although Leopold II was very unpopular at the time of his death in 1909, a committee was formed soon after for the purpose of erecting a monument to his memory. A public subscription was launched through an appeal to the country and the establishment of the national committee in 1914 was published in the Belgian Official Gazette of 31 May 1914. The appeal stated that thanks to King Leopold II, Belgium had been able to enjoy a fantastic colony for 35 years. However, the war thwarted that plan and the monument was not finally inaugurated until 15 November 1926. (15 November is the feast day of St. Leopold and the celebration day of the dynasty.)

It was the final work of Thomas Vinçotte and was completed by architect François Malfait, who built the pedestal and redesigned the square. The sculpture was cast by the Brussels-based *Compagnie des Bronzes*. All three names are listed on the monument.

On the pedestal is the Latin inscription, '*Leopoldo II Regi Belgarum 1865-1909 Patria Memor*'. On the reverse side, a plaque recalls the colonial origin of the materials used: *'The copper and tin used in this statue originate in Belgian Congo – They have been kindly offered by the Union Minière du Haut-Katanga'* (translated by *). Four thousand tonnes of copper and 203 kilograms of refined tin were incorporated into the sculpture.

The UMHK was a company founded by Leopold II. This 'benevolent' delivery completely obscures the conditions in which Congolese were required to work.

In his inauguration speech, Prime Minister Jaspar said, *'But the masterpiece of his life, his magnum opus, the implementation of which, thanks to the efforts of his genius, had become as grand as the idea itself, was the creation of a colonial empire, an idea that had obsessed him since his youth [...] It is this work that we wish to honour first and foremost here today. It is this work that definitively confirmed his genius and it is thanks to this work that he was a King in the truest sense.'* (These and subsequent references are from the book: *Léopold II, Les monuments à Bruxelles et à Léopoldville*, undated [after 1929], 20-21, translated by *).

In a letter dated 22 November 1926 to the chairmen of the *Comité National du Monument*, Prime Minister Jaspar wrote, among other things, *'[...] a significant gesture of gratitude from the whole of Belgium to this King who [...] strived all his life [...] to enlarge the country with a colonial empire whose riches today offer the best guarantee for the reconstruction after the calamities caused by a war without precedent'* (*Ibid*. 33, translated by *).

The public subscription had raised more than the money needed and King Albert I had a second statue cast that was sent to Léopoldville/Kinshasa and inaugurated on 1 July 1928. It had been transported by the *Compagnie belge maritime du Congo* as far as Matadi, and then by the *Compagnie des chemins de fer du Congo* to Léopoldville/Kinshasa; Manucongo was in charge of stevedoring. In that regard, the statue testified to its strong association. Moreover, all of the companies mentioned had actually responded to the call for tenders.

The monument is set up in the axis line of the entrance to the Park of the Royal Palace on the Boulevard du Régent. This central location in the capital was to remind passers-by time and again of the immense gratitude that Belgium owed to this king. Moreover, this monument is also very close to the place from which Leopold II governed 'his Congo' and in close proximity to the head offices of several colonial companies.

It originally overlooked the headquarters of the Bank Lambert (now ING) that financed Leopold II's first expeditions in the Congo. Baron Lambert himself played a prominent role in the colonisation of the Congo. According to Matthew Stanard, the position of the statue mirrors the placement of the equestrian statue of Godfrey of Bouillon in the Place Royale. Both men went into battle against 'the Arabs' and became sole rulers of an overseas territory (of Jerusalem, in the case of Godfrey of Bouillon) (Stanard 2019: 210). More recently, another spatial relationship became very significant: the statue is located only a few metres from the Matonge neighbourhood and from the Square Patrice Lumumba, a taxi rank, a windy *no man's land* and one of the least pleasant places in all of Brussels. A place that had not formed the object of a study before it was chosen.

The monument is located in a safeguarded zone but is not itself the subject of a protective order. The Place du Trône is being redesigned into a space that is open to all.

Because of its enormous size, the statue looks arrogant and dominant due to the way that it marks the entrance to the Royal Palace grounds in the city centre and forms a monumental landmark in the urban avenues:

- The king is driving the horse with his left hand only; this is typical of military horsemanship, as the right hand had to be kept free to hold weapons;
- The king's right arm is cocked like a bow, ready to strike or stretch;
- The horse:
    - is restraining its head – that means that the horse's forehead, i.e. the part from the base of the head to the nostrils, is behind the perpendicular - and is keeping its mouth open. This suggests that the King is adopting an authoritarian approach and is keeping the horse docile by treating it with a hard hand;
    - is therefore bowing its head as the King tightens the reins, forcing it to open its mouth. The position of the feet in the stirrups also illustrates the great pressure to which the King is subjecting the horse.

FIG. 13. The monument to Leopold II after the *Black Lives Matter* protest in June 2020. (Photo: Igor Pliner)

The iconography of this statue alone speaks of violence, arrogance and potential domination. What we see is both a ruler and one of his subjects, a horse which, like the inhabitants of the Congo Free State, is violently subdued.

Also, a continuous succession of various rituals that have taken place around the monument have inscripted it in a colonial context:

- Since its inauguration, colonial associations have mainly organised their commemoration days around this equestrian statue ;
- In the 1950s, this was an obligatory stop for carefully selected Congolese to come and lay a wreath here during their stay in Belgium, in a pilgrimage staged by the colonial power;
- By 1960, the monument had not only become a site of resistance to Congo's independence, but former colonials also resorted to violence there:
    - After the mutiny of Congolese soldiers on 5 July 1960, less than a week after Congo's independence, Emile Janssens, the Belgian commander of the Force Publique, resigned. Upon his arrival in Brussels, he laid flowers at the foot of the monument and is said to have said, '*Sire, ils vous ont cochonné*.' (Sir, they've ruined things for you).
    - On 8 July 1960, former colonials organised a first demonstration in front of the statue of Leopold II; on 10 July 1960, the members of the two committees formed on 8 and 9 July, the *Rassemblement pour la défense des Belges au Congo* and the *Comité d'action et de défense des Belges d'Afrique*, knelt

before the monument and called for military intervention in the Congo. About a thousand demonstrators, most of them former colonials from Congo, tried to march to the Royal Palace but were stopped by the police. Fierce riots took place.

Later, more protests were organised there:

- On 9 September 2008, the writer Théophile de Giraud daubed the bust with red watercolour, a symbol of blood. About fifteen sympathisers encouraged the writer in this effort;
- In 2015, a demonstration was held on the Place du Trône after the City of Brussels announced its plan to organise a tribute to Leopold II; the statue was daubed with red paint and the tribute was cancelled;
- In 2018, Laura Nsengiyumva created the work *PeoPL*, a replica in ice of the equestrian statue crowned by an inverted pedestal; for an entire night, the statue slowly melted away, symbolizing the disappearance of memory;
- A petition to remove the statues of King Leopold II received 84,395 signatures;
- As part of the BLM (Black Lives Matter) movement, unprecedented protests take place here, with the slogan '*Stop Cleaning, Start Reflecting*.' This is an interesting reflection, because the process of erasure no longer lies in taking down the work but in the fact that all of the graffiti is being cleaned away. This telling contrast illustrates the hierarchical approach with regard to the public realm here by treating colonial memory as a fixed, unchanging, dominant fact and Congolese/decolonial memory as an *afterthought*.

4.3.1.2. The Parc du Cinquantenaire

4.3.1.2.1. General

The fiftieth anniversary of Belgium was celebrated in 1880 on the site of the current Parc du Cinquantenaire, which had been laid out for the occasion, as a culmination, in urban planning terms, on the sloping route that forms the extension of the Rue de la Loi and acts as a gateway to Tervuren.

Because of its history, and because of the concentration of its museums, its colonial and national monuments, and the Great Mosque (in a building designed for the 1897 World's Fair), the Parc du Cinquantenaire is an urban place of national importance, in which traces of colonial history are present in various ways. The Parc du Cinquantenaire indirectly commemorates not only Belgian colonial figures, but we also find traces of colonial sculptors such as Thomas Vinçotte who immortalised them and colonial architects such as Charles Girault who, by order of Leopold II, designed the triumphal arch as well as the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren. In addition, however, the Parc du Cinquantenaire also has an anti-colonial historical layer (which is invisible today): the second Pan-African Congress also took place here in 1921 (cf. *Section 4.3.1.2.5.*).

The entire site and the Temple of Human Passions were protected in 1976 and other protections, mainly of parts of the arch and exhibition complex followed in successive decades.

4.3.1.2.2. The triumphal arch

The triumphal arch is a colossal architectural monument, erected as part of the Parc du Cinquantenaire to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Belgian independence, but the current version of the arch was not completed until the 75th anniversary of independence. The Belgian architect Gédéon Bordiau had designed an initial version of the triumphal arch, flanked by two wings consisting of large halls connected by a semi-circular colonnade. Today, the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History and *Autoworld* are housed in those original wings. In 1888, the complex hosted a Great International Competition of Science and Industry. Additional buildings were added for the 1897 World's Fair. After Bordiau's death, the French architect Charles Girault organised the construction of the current triple triumphal arch, which was inaugurated in 1905 on the occasion of Belgium's 75th anniversary, and which, with its larger size and monumentality, better matched the aspirations of Leopold II, who over the years also co-financed the construction by the Belgian State from 'his own pocket'.

FIG. 14. The triumphal arch with the semi-circularcolonnade in the Parc du Cinquantenaire (G. Bordiau & C. Girault, 1905) (Photo: Urban.brussels, 2010)

The archway consists of three equal arches, crowned with a bronze quadriga depicting Brabant, raising the national flag. The sculpture is a work of Thomas Vinçotte and Jules Lagae. At the bottom of the arch are eight statues for the eight other Belgian provinces by Guillaume De Groot, Albert Desenfans, Jef Lambeaux, Charles Van Der Stappen and Thomas Vinçotte.

The original plan to exhibit the collections of the Congo Free State in the new complex could not go ahead due to lack of space. Leopold II therefore had a temporary museum building constructed on the royal estate in Tervuren. The triumphal arch marks the connection of the capital via the Avenue de Tervueren with that domain in Tervuren. It was also largely funded by Leopold's fortune, which was derived from the profits obtained from the rubber industry. As such, the 'arch of the severed hands' (*'l'arc des mains coupées*') as socialist leader Émile Vandervelde called it, can be read as a reference to Leopold II's successful occupation and colonisation of Congo (Stanard 2011: 195-196).

4.3.1.2.3. The Royal Museum of Art and History

The Museum nowadays called the Museum of Art & History (which forms part of the Royal Museums of Art and History) goes back in part to a museum founded on the initiative of Leopold II, but the history of the institution, the building, and its collections is complex. Some collections, such as the Apamea room or the Egyptian collections, illustrate the way in which Belgian scientific and economic foreign activities are intertwined.

Today, the Museum preserves the original equestrian statue of Leopold II on the Place du Trône in Brussels, created by Thomas Vinçotte, and a large collection of art nouveau objects created for the colonial exhibition that Leopold II organised in Tervuren in 1897, as well as art deco decorative objects inspired by Congolese material culture.

4.3.1.2.4. The Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History

The permanent exhibition pays considerable attention to the wars fought in the Congo Free State, as opposed to the *Force Publique's* participation in the two World Wars and the participation of Congolese volunteers in World War I in Belgium.

4.3.1.2.5. *Autoworld*

FIG. 15. Second Pan-African Congress at the World Palace, Brussels, September 1921. (Photo: Mundaneum)

This private museum was created in 1986 and housed in a building erected for the 1897 World's Fair. The building was originally called the World Palace. Between 1920 and 1934, it housed the *Mundaneum*. In 1921, the second Pan-African Congress took place there, organised among others by the Congolese Paul Panda Farnana, a veteran of World War I and the first president of the *Union Congolaise*, which was the first

Congolese association in Belgium and was founded in 1919; the Belgian Paul Otlet (a lawyer, entrepreneur and writer); the Belgian Henri La Fontaine, a lawyer who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1913; Blaise Diagne from Senegal who became the first black French MP; the African American William Edward Burghardt (usually W.E.B.) DuBois (an academic, activist and author). Panda Farnana's participation in this congress, which the Belgian authorities considered a gathering of black communists and nationalists who wanted an end to the European yoke, cost him his reputation with the Belgian establishment and led to colonial agents being banned from bringing Congolese to Belgium from 1930.

4.3.1.2.6. The plaque commemorating the Belgian Dynasty and the Congo

Under the Cinquantenaire Arch, between the two museum wings, hangs a plaque with the text '*Hommage à la dynastie – La Belgique et le Congo reconnaissants / Hulde aan de Dynastie – België en Congo erkentelijk MDCCCXXXI*' (Homage to the Dynasty - Belgium and Congo grateful MDCCCXXXI) showing the first five Kings of the Belgians: Leopold I, Leopold II, Albert I, Leopold III and Baudouin. The date, 1831, refers to the coronation of Leopold I. The plaque was affixed in 1956 on the 125th anniversary of the dynasty and was designed by Alfred Courtens.

4.3.1.2.7. The monument to the Belgian pioneers in the Congo

After Leopold II's death, under the patronage of Albert I, a national committee was formed to erect a monument. It was funded by the Belgian State, the City of Brussels and subscribers, and was executed by Thomas Vinçotte. The monument was inaugurated in 1921. It has been protected since 1976. The highly weathered monument consists of five sculpture groups with bilingual texts affixed to what appears to be a curved theatre wall:

- a languishing black man with a crocodile on a background of plants (the Congo River);
- a Belgian soldier crushes under his foot an 'Arab' slave trader ('*Belgian military heroism exterminates the Arab slave trader*');
- a Belgian soldier protects his officer *('The Belgian soldier sacrifices his life for his superior who is fatally wounded'*);
- a seated white woman carrying a torch raises her veil in front of a half-naked African woman showing her her child ('*The black race welcomed by Belgium'*);
- a bas-relief shows Africans being carried away by soldiers and missionaries to an official-looking bearded man, perhaps Leopold II ('*The Discoverers'*, '*The Missionary*' and '*The Belgians in Congoland*');
- the frieze at the top bears the inscription: '*I undertook the task in Congo in the interests of civilization and for the good of Belgium. Leopold II, 3 June 1906*'. Above the cornice it reads, '*Erected in honour of the first Belgian trailblazers*'.

With the exception of the economic exploitation of the colony, all elements of colonial propaganda converge here:

- the 'civilising mission', linked to Belgium's interests;
- the tribute to the 'pioneers';

- the colonial triad of monarchy, army and (Catholic) mission orders that existed at the time;
- Belgian 'liberators' *versus* 'Arab' slave traders;
- Belgians *versus* Congolese:
    - the superior position of the clothed white woman *versus* the lower-ranking black woman who is wearing little clothing;
    - the association of the black man with an animal, *in this case* a crocodile, an animal that consumes people;
- The extent to which Congolese are said to have accepted colonisation is shown by the fact that the Congolese woman offers her child to a Belgian woman.

FIG. 16. *Monument to the Belgian pioneers in the Congo*, Parc du Cinquantenaire (Thomas Vinçotte, 1921). (Photo: Urban.brussels, 2010)

4.3.1.2.8. The monument to General Albert Thys

This allegorical statue was conceived by Thomas Vinçotte, executed by Frans Huygelen, inaugurated in 1926 and protected in 1976. It shows the 'Belgian Genius', represented by a woman in classical style guiding Congo and holding a horn of plenty. A bronze medallion shows the profile of General Albert Thys (1849-1915). The winged wheels on the pedestal refer to the role Thys played in the construction of the first railroad between Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) and Matadi in the Congo Free State.

Henry Morton Stanley, who prospected Congo for Leopold II, said that without a railway, Congo was not worth a penny: the railway was needed to transport first ivory, and later rubber, from the interior to the coast and be exported from there. To that end, residents of the region were first expropriated and then required to construct the railway there. The

human toll was incredibly high. The railroad was built by the *Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo*, which Albert Thys had founded in 1898 to prevent any foreign investment in the Congo.

The image does not (explicitly) refer to the other companies Thys founded and the fortunes he made from them in the Congo Free State. For him, as for many other industrialists, Congo proved to be a horn of plenty indeed.

4.3.1.3. The bust of Lieutenant General Émile P.J. Storms

In 1876, Leopold II founded the *Association Internationale Africaine* (AIA), ostensibly to 'civilise' Africa and end the slave trade, but in reality to conquer and exploit territories in Africa. In 1882, Storms set out, on behalf of the Association, as commander of the Fourth African East Coast Expedition to the Congo. During his efforts to gain control of the area west of Lake Tanganyika, Storms clashed with Lusinga lwa Ng'-ombe (c.1840-1884), a Tabwa chief from the Marungu region in the east of the present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo. Storms set up a punitive expedition against him. In the course of a massacre, Lusinga was beheaded on 4 December 1884. His head was brought on a spear to Storms, who used it as a deterrent. On his final return to Belgium in 1885, Storms brought the heads of Lusinga and two other Congolese with him. He exhibited them in his home in Ixelles, along with objects he had brought with him, including an ancestor statue that belonged to Lusinga. After his death, Storms' widow donated the skulls and objects to the Museum of Belgian Congo. In 1964, the Royal Museum for Central Africa, as the museum was by now called, transferred the skulls to the Royal Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels (where they are still preserved), but retained the objects.

FIG. 17. Bust of Émile Storms, at the Square De Meeûs à Ixelles, covered in red paint as part of a protest in 2020 (The bust van cleaned in 2021) (Photo: P.Ingelaere © urban.brussels)

In 1906, still during Storms' lifetime, a bronze bust of Storms was dedicated in Ixelles. It shows the uniformed soldier on a man-sized pedestal in which the inscription '*Au Lt. Général Storms 1846-1918*' is chiselled and under a laurel wreath, '*Fonda la Station de M'Pala, Mai 1883, Étendit la civilisation sur la région du Tanganika*' (Founded the M'Pala Station, May 1883, Extended civilisation over the Tanganika region. Translated by *) – which cites the myth of the civilisation mission. After it was removed by the Germans in 1943, the bust was replaced after World War II by the current stone bust on the Square De Meeûs (in the Leopold Quarter in Ixelles) that was made by Marnix D'Haveloose. The

monument is not individually protected as a structure, but the Square De Meeûs was protected as a landscape in 1972. The monument is one of the statues in the square, but they do not form part of the visual structure of the park. The bust is protected until 2043 by the copyright of D'Haveloose, who died in 1973.

During the wave of contesting ~~vandalism~~ after Black Lives Matter, red paint was poured over Storms' bust and he received wider media attention because of his extreme acts of violence. In the summer of 2021, the red paint was removed, although traces of paint, penetrated into the stone, remain visible on the pedestal in particular. It is not clear who was responsible for this cleaning.

The bust of Storms is a prime example of a monument to a person, for which support within society for the memorialisation of the person commemorated has disappeared today.

4.3.1.4. The Monument to the Colonial Pioneers of Ixelles

FIG. 18. *Monument to the Colonial Pioneers of Ixelles* (1933), Square de la Croix-Rouge, Ixelles. (coll. Belfius Banque – Académie royale de Belgique © ARB- Urban.brussels)

The monument on the Square de la Croix-Rouge in Ixelles was created by the sculptor Marcel Rau and the architect Alphonse Boelens and was erected in 1933 in memory of Ixelles' pioneers in Congo from 1876 to 1908. Those who do not analyse the monument up close only see the stylised head of a Mangbetu woman atop a column. It is the only (monumental) representation of a black woman in a public space in Brussels that stands alone. The monument has not been contested in recent years. Ostensibly, it appears to be an aesthetically pleasing representation of an individual Mangbetu woman. However, it is not a portrait of an individual woman, but a voyeuristic colonial fantasy of 'the' Mangbetu woman, based on the assumption that 'the' Mangbetu existed as a separate ethnic group or people. Throughout the colonial period, Mangbetu women were idealised as simultaneously beautiful, but deformed, because of the habit of lengthening the skull.

The fact that only the head is shown betrays the colonial fascination with that skull extension and highlights how so-called 'racial types' were reduced to what were supposed to be their most specific characteristics.

Mangbetu women were elevated, as it were, as products of 'civilization' and works of art in 'wild' Africa (Schildkrout 2008: 71), but at the same time reduced to their physicality and their sexuality. In colonial society, intimacy and intimidation were closely connected. Even self-proclaimed racists who advocated strict racial segregation justified such relations in the colonial context in the name of *'la conquête du mâle'*, the right of white men over black women (Ketels 1935: 139).

Such representations of racialised Mangbetu women were frequently used as means of colonial propaganda during the colonial period: on stamps, on Colonial Lottery publicity, on this statue and on another statue in Malines, etc. The image confirms the erroneous colonial idea of 'the' Mangbetu culture that was said not to have been influenced by contacts with other cultures, including those of Europeans. As such, the image dehumanises the women who lived during the colonial period in the region thought to be inhabited by 'the' Mangbetu.

Next to the head, the attentive observer sees the star of the Congo Free State, which refers to the light of 'civilisation' that the 'pioneers' are said to have brought with them. The column features the names of the Ixellians in question, a bas-relief of an African tree framed by the dates 1876-1908, an elephant, a rhinoceros and a slit drum. The monument therefore summarises the colonial vision that made no distinction between Congolese nature and culture and presented Congolese not as individual persons, but as 'racial' types.

4.3.1.5. The commemorative plaque on the façade of the 'Centre d'Enseignement Secondaire d'Etterbeek Ernest Richard'

FIG 19. Commemorative plaque dedicated pioneers form Etterbeek, on facade (rue Louis Hap) of the Institut Technique Ernest Richard (Photo: P.Ingelaere © urban.brussels, 2021)

We found no information about Ernest Richard, except that according to the Centre's website, he was a Belgian parliamentarian.

The plaque shows a Congolese woman in profile looking down and appearing to clasp a plant with her hands. Underneath it reads '*Aux Etterbeekois pionniers de la civilisation morts au Congo, 1876-1908*,' (To the citizens of Etterbeek fulfilling a mission to civilise who died in Congo 1876-1908), followed by the names of four men, flanked on the left by the coat of arms of the municipality and on the right by the star of the Congo Free State. The plaque is all the more problematic because of its location: in a school building, it could provide an

occasion for certain white students to express themselves in a racist manner towards fellow black students on the grounds that they would be less 'civilised' than themselves.

4.3.1.6. The Mermaid of the Congo Boat Baudouinville

This 1952 bronze sculpture by Dolf Ledel on the Square de Léopoldville in Etterbeek ostensibly depicts only a mermaid who, as such, at first glance has nothing to do with the colonial past.

In reality, however, it is a replica of the one in the first-class pool of the liner *Baudouinville*, which was responsible for providing a scheduled service between Antwerp and Matadi. During World War II, Germans took possession of the ship and converted it first into a hospital ship and then into a residential ship. After being sunk by mines in Nantes and set on fire, the ship was brought back to Antwerp after liberation and scrapped.

As a result, the sculpture has an ambiguous meaning: it refers both to World War II and to one of the famous Congo boats on which Belgians could travel in luxury, while Congolese could only board as sailors (the connection by sea between Congo and Belgium offered them a unique opportunity to settle in Belgium illegally on arrival in the port of Antwerp). It raises the question of whether the memories of this war can be kept alive in other ways, for example, by paying attention instead to the Congolese who worked as soldiers and/or colonial subjects in that war.

4.3.1.7. The Monument to the Troops in the African Campaigns

FIG. 20. *Monument to the Troops in the African Campaigns*, square Riga, Schaerbeek-Helmet. (Photo: Urban.brussels © Collection communale de Schaerbeek)

The monument to the troops that fell during the campaigns of the *Force Publique* was designed by Willy Kreitz and inaugurated in 1970. It was financed by colonial

associations, the issue of a stamp by the then PTT (Ministry of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones) and donations that came mainly from large former colonial firms, such as the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga*, Cibeka and Unilever.

Rather than showing two portraits, it shows two stylised representations of the heads of a European soldier wearing a colonial helmet and of a Congolese soldier wearing a *fez* according to stereotypical colonial representations, and two shaking hands that are said to refer to their good relationship and cooperation. On the back of the monument, in French and Dutch, is the text of a speech that King Baudouin delivered in Léopoldville on the occasion of Congolese independence, in which he paid a lively tribute to the *Force Publique*. Nine blue stones placed in a circle recall victories or campaigns of the *Force Publique* in Sub-Saharan Africa, in the Middle East, Burma and Italy.

The representation of the European and Congolese soldier and the two hands shaking give the wrong impression that Belgian and Congolese soldiers were on an equal footing. This was absolutely not the case: throughout the colonial period (and even in the first days after independence in 1960), all of the officers were white. Moreover, this symbolic gesture ignores the fact that there are major differences in the ways European and Congolese soldiers are commemorated in public space in Belgium.

This is the only war memorial in Belgium that commemorates the contribution of Congolese soldiers during the two World Wars, but it is limited to soldiers of the *Force publique* who fought outside Belgium, while soldiers who fought in Belgium during World War I are not commemorated.

While many of the Belgian fallen have an individual grave in a military cemetery and the unknown (Belgian) soldier has a monument in Brussels, there is no monument in Belgium that refers to the contributions of individual Congolese soldiers.

As a result of its nationalist-militarist character, the monument plays down contributions of a non-military nature: the role of soldiers' wives and bearers during World War I; the "war effort" that required Congolese in Belgian Congo to participate during World War II; the Belgians of Congolese descent who were in the resistance during World War II (two of them were veterans of World War I). Not as worthy of commemoration, but for that matter also not to be forgotten is the fact that the first atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima was made with uranium mined by Congolese miners at the Shinkolowbe mine in the Congo.

Initially, Belgian veterans of the *Force Publique* and patriotic and colonial associations came to pay tribute to this monument annually. From 2000 onwards, Congolese were also invited: veterans, but also ministers, cadets and student officers from the Royal Military Academy. Since 2008, Congolese gather there on 11 November to commemorate the Congolese soldiers who took part in the two World Wars and who are systematically forgotten during official Armistice Day commemorations, even though they contributed to the victories achieved during those two wars.

These new practices of remembrance are giving the monument a new purpose and meaning. However, this does not remove the one-sided and problematic nature of the monument: the unequal relations between Belgian officers and Congolese soldiers and the limited ways in which Congolese are commemorated for their contributions to the two World Wars.

FIG. 21. Commemoration of Congolese veterans by Bakushinta and Change in front of the *Monument to the Troops in African Campaigns*. (Photo: Archives asbl Change)

4.3.2. Toponymy

4.3.2.1. The Boulevard Général Jacques

General Alphonse Jacques (1858-1928) gave his name to a central avenue in Etterbeek, which is home to the Major Géruzet barracks, which were completed in 1885. He is therefore only one of a number of soldiers after whom a street was named in that municipality. Just a few days after his death, the *Avenue Militaire* in Etterbeek received his name, because of his military service during World War I. This, in itself, is independent of the colonial past, but his reputation was tarnished because of certain of his actions in the Congo Free State that caused a stir in the period before the start of the war and have now overshadowed his heroic role in World War I for several years.

Jacques first made his name as the leader of an anti-slavery expedition (1891-1894) that brought home to him the Congo Free State's ambiguous attitude towards Arabo-Swahili slave traders. Between 1895 and 1898, as district commissioner of Lac Léopold II, Leopold II's personal extraction area, he organised punitive expeditions in the Congo Free State against Congolese who opposed the new state and the taxes they had to pay by harvesting rubber. In 1898, he wrote to Mathieu Leyder, the postmaster of Inongo in the district he administered, telling Leyder to notify the people of Inongo that Jacques would exterminate them all to the last man if they cut one more rubber liana to boycott the rubber taxes. After Jacques charged Leyder with murdering two Africans and a prisoner, Leyder tried to exonerate himself using Jacques's letter (Dewulf & Gysel 2016:

96). He was sentenced in the court of first instance to 5 years' penal servitude; in the court of second instance, that sentence was doubled to 10 years. Jacques himself would have been accused of voluntary manslaughter, but that case file against him is already said to have been lost during the period 1898-1908 (Dewulf & Gysel 2016: 99). In 1906, Jacques was openly accused in the Belgian parliament, based on his letter to Leyder.

In 1914 he took part in the fighting at the start of hostilities in Liège, then in Antwerp and finally in Diksmuide. Because of his concern for the living conditions of his soldiers, they called him '*noss Jacques*' and 'onze Jaak.' (our Jacques). After the armistice, he was considered a national hero, 'the hero of the Yser.' Among other things, he was awarded the Grand Ribbon in the Order of Leopold, Belgium's highest decoration. In 1919, he was ennobled and accorded the title of baron and, from 1924 onwards, was allowed to add "de Dixmude" to his name. During his eulogy for Jacques, four years later, Emile Vandervelde, who had earlier rebuked him during the Parliamentary debate, did not mention the letter he wrote to Leyder, but described him as a war hero who had fought against slavery in Congo and for the country's independence in Belgium. As was the case with Leopold II and in a context of patriotism after World War I, crimes against Congolese in the Congo Free State were covered with the cloak of love.

Several streets were also named after Jacques elsewhere and statues to him were erected on the Grote Markt in Diksmuide, in the park of the former abbey in Stavelot, in the town hall of Liège, in Halle and in the town park of Vielsalm. Still in Vielsalm, the *Association familiale Jacques de Dixmude* created the *Musée Général Jacques*, in which numerous iconographic documents and family souvenirs are on display. The Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History in Brussels has two plaques bearing his image.

Adam Hochschild's 1998 book *King Leopold II's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* – later translated and published under the title *De geest van koning Leopold II en de plundering van de Congo* (The Ghost of King Leopold II and the Plundering of the Congo) – re-evoked the memory of Jacques' letter to Leyder. This, in particular, led to protests against Jacques' statue on the Grote Markt in Diksmuide. The fact that the French-speaking Jacques was honoured with a statue in the city of the Yser Tower – which has important symbolic meaning for the Flemish Movement – also formed part of the background to those protests (Verbeke 2011).

There is no evidence that Jacques actually carried out his threat in the letter he wrote to Leyder or that he was guilty of as many misdeeds as, say, Léon Fiévez, Charles Lemaire or Léon Rom, although in the context of the excessive violence that characterised Leopold II's rule of Congo in general, that is not exactly a criterion. Like many others, in the system of a rubber-growing region that was removed from the direct control of higher colonial government officials, he operated as a man for whom the end justified the means. In his blind ambition to meet the requested rubber quota, he did not hesitate to send out punitive expeditions to achieve his goal: '*Within the context of the rubber regime, we can hardly call Jacques a lone wolf. He is one of the many intermediate links tasked with ensuring that the maximum quantity of raw materials was extracted from the colony at a minimal cost'* (Dewulf & Gysel 2016: 122, translated by *).

Boulevard Général Jacques is located in a neighbourhood in which many names recall soldiers who played a role in Belgian (colonial) history. If the street name sign does not

refer to the role Alphonse Jacques played in the Congo Free State, it also does not mention what he did during World War I. It is therefore possible that most Brussels residents have no idea who he was and why a street was named after him.

Even if Jacques' contributions to the defence of Belgium during World War I are beyond dispute, the question remains whether, given his misdeeds in the Congo Free State, he should be commemorated in Brussels by allowing one of the Region's main thoroughfares to bear his name.[9]

4.3.2.2. Avenue Alexandre Galopin

This street runs from Avenue du Onze Novembre to Place Aimé Dandoy in Ixelles. It was originally called *Rue Le Marinel*, before being renamed in 1949 after Alexandre Galopin who was murdered in 1944 by members of the collaborating pro-national socialist organisation DeVlag (*Deutsch-Vlämische Arbeitsgemeinschaft*).

Alexandre Galopin (1879-1944) had served the main Belgian *holding company*, the Société Générale de Belgique, as director (in 1923), as vice-governor (in 1933) and as governor (in 1935). In 1932, he was appointed president of the *Société minière du Bécéka* and director of the *Union minière du Haut-Katanga (UMHK)*, of which he became president in 1939.

As a board member of the Société Générale de Belgique, which included the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga*, which was described as a state within a state, and the *Forminière*, he undoubtedly played an important role in the economic exploitation of Belgian Congo during the interwar period and World War II. During the war, Congolese had to participate in the 'war effort' by harvesting rubber at an accelerated rate (which brought back memories of the rubber terror in Congo Free State) and by working in industry, mining and/or processing natural resources such as copper, uranium, etc. This led to a strike by Congolese workers of the UMHK in Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) in the then Katanga province, which was violently suppressed on 9 December 1941. Also during the war, Galopin was the intellectual and political leader in Belgium of the 'Galopin Committee' and inspirer of the 'Galopin Doctrine' which, during the first years of the occupation, set the lines for economic-financial policy and, from 1941 onwards, financed two groups that were developing plans for economic and social reconstruction. Members of DeVlag murdered him because they considered him the incarnation of Belgian patriotism and anti-Nazism (Luyten s.d.).

The Avenue Alexandre Galopin does not appear in publications on colonial monuments and street names, and Galopin is not known to the general public as a colonial player. This case illustrates (once more) how individual persons can be historically complex and ambiguously interwoven with historical realities, and how commemoration, or its problematisation, depends on rebuilding (other) historical narratives around these half-forgotten figures.

[9] Alphonse Jacques is sometimes confused with Auguste Jacques (1872-1928), who began his career in the *Force Publique* and in 1899 was commissioned by the d'Ursel family, which formed part of the Belgian nobility, to develop cocoa plantations in what is now the Congolese province of Kongo Central, where he still has a poor reputation. Although he grew cocoa, he did not give his name to the Jacques chocolate brand (Dewulf & Gysel 2017: 118-119).

4.3.2.3. Rue Edmond Picard

This street runs from Place Georges Brugmann in Ixelles to Rue Vanderkindere in Uccle. It was constructed between 1902 and 1904. Edmond Picard (1836-1924) was a lawyer, writer, literary critic, patron and socialist senator. Between 1913 and 1917, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature seven times, including twice by Maurice Maeterlinck, the only Belgian ever to win the prize.

Picard, however, was also a rabid and unabashed anti-Semite and racist. He described Jews as 'the plague'. In his book *En Congolie*, he referred to the irreversible differences that were said to exist between whites and Congolese . He compared Congolese to apes and wondered whether, in relation to dominant white people, they would not always remain slaves in disguise or indirect serfs (Picard 1896: 78-80).

About Congolese women he wrote: ‘L'odeur, la teinte, la physionomie indéchiffrable sous les ténèbres du derme, l'aspect vulvaire et sanguinolent de la bouche malgré la splendeur de la denture, apaisent les velléités masculines’ (The smell, the tint, the indecipherable physiognomy under the darkness of the dermis, the vulvar and bloody aspect of the mouth in spite of the splendour of the teeth, appease male inclinations) (*ibid.*: 166, translated by *).

For ten years, he taught jurisprudence at the Université nouvelle de Bruxelles, where he initiated generations of students into pseudo-theories of law based on the inescapable struggle between the races. He claimed to be a racial (Aryan) legal scholar. As founder of the *Journal des Tribunaux*, he proclaimed the greatness of the colonial project. The *Journal des Tribunaux* and its entourage were 'vectors of colonial law'. Foulek Ringelheim wrote in 1999, *‘Picard professa pendant quarante ans, jusqu'au dernier jour de sa vie en 1924, les formes les plus effroyables du racisme et de l’antisémitisme... Le mépris des races inférieures et la haine des Juifs ont fixé toute sa vision du monde, ont déterminé toutes ses conceptions sociales, juridiques, littéraires, scientifiques’* (For forty years, until the last day of his life in 1924, Picard professed the most abominable forms of racism and anti-Semitism.... Contempt for inferior races and hatred of Jews determined his entire vision of the world and all his social, legal, literary and scientific views) (Ringelheim 1999, translated by *).

In 1994, the Brussels lawyer Michel Graindorge was convicted in the Court of First Instance of knocking over a bust of Picard at the Palais de Justice in Brussels. In 1995, the Brussels Court of Appeal granted him a deferment of his sentence. The bust was removed in 1998 but was reinstated that same year by the curator of the Palais de Justice.

Given that Picard was someone who systematically promoted racist ideas, it seems inexplicable that a street still bears his name.

4.3.2.4. Rue Linné

Because of the proximity of the (former) Botanical Garden, several streets in this neighbourhood of Saint-Josse-ten-Noode have names relating to the world of nature and biology, such as the Rue des Plantes and also the Rue Linné, which refers to Carl Linnaeus, also known as Carl Linné. However, since in Dutch the street is called

Linnéstraat, while in Dutch the man himself is known as Carl Linnaeus, there is a good chance that Dutch speakers will not understand to whom or what the street name refers.

Carl Linnaeus, a Swede, was the founder of biological taxonomy. In the first edition of his most famous book *Systema Naturae* (1735), he divided the living world into the kingdoms of animals (including humans, along with mammals and primates), plants and minerals. In the first nine editions of the book, he similarly divided the human species up into four 'varieties'.

- *Europaeus albus* or white European;
- *Americanus rubescens* or reddish American;
- *Asiaticus fuscus* or yellow-brown Asian;
- *Africanus niger* or black African.

These corresponded to the four continents known to exist at that time. While in the case of other animals, Linnaeus spoke of 'subspecies', he used the term 'varieties' when referring to humans, because he was convinced that there was only one human species that varied in appearance based on climate and environment. He focused on geography and thought that skin colour is largely a product of climate – a random, external factor.

In his tenth edition (1758), he added notes on the four varieties, describing the following attributes:

- skin colour, medical temperament (corresponding to the four medieval humours) and posture;
- physical characteristics related to hair colour and shape, eye colour, and distinctive facial features;
- behaviour;
- way of dressing;
- form of government.

He posited that each 'variety' has certain characteristics and went on to create personality types for entire populations. It is still not clear why Linnaeus changed his descriptions of human 'varieties' from purely geographical to what we would now call cultural characteristics. By so doing, however, he laid the foundation for 'scientific' racist theories.

Over time, he shifted the order of the 'varieties', but he invariably placed the variety *Africanus* at the bottom, describing them most comprehensively and in the most derogatory manner in all editions.

The British Linnaeus Society, from which the Working Group derived this brief overview, considers its racial classification system a blot on his record (Linnaeus Society of London s.d.). In the context of classes and courses on biology, it is perfectly possible to critically interpret Linnaeus's ideas without minimising his far-reaching influence on biological classification systems. A street name, however, does not allow for such differentiation to take place.

4.3.2.5. Misunderstandings

In the published literature on colonial toponymy, a number of place names are wrongly associated with individuals who played a role in Belgian Africa. Rue Charles Lemaire in Auderghem was not named after the Walloon 'pioneer' Charles Lemaire, but after an inhabitant of Auderghem who, as a member of the resistance, was killed by the Germans in 1942; the name dates from 1950.

Rue Renkin in Schaerbeek refers not to Jules Renkin, the first Minister of Colonies, but to Renkin or Rennequin Sualem, a master carpenter from Liège who devised the machine at Marly that was to pump water from the Seine to the fountains of Marly and Versailles under the reign of Louis XIV.

Rue Masui refers to Jean Baptiste Masui, the general manager of the Belgian State Railways, Posts and Telegraphs and not to Théodore Masui, the general secretary of the Congolese section of the colonial exhibition in Tervuren during the 1897 World's Fair.

The Pétillon metro station and Rue Major Pétillon derive their names not from Léon Pétillon, Governor General of Belgian Congo from 1952 to 1958, but from Major Arthur Pétillon, who was active in the Congo Free State.

Rue Picard in Saint-Jean-Molenbeek does not refer to Edmond Picard.

4.3.3. Instruments of colonial propaganda

4.3.3.1. Lever House

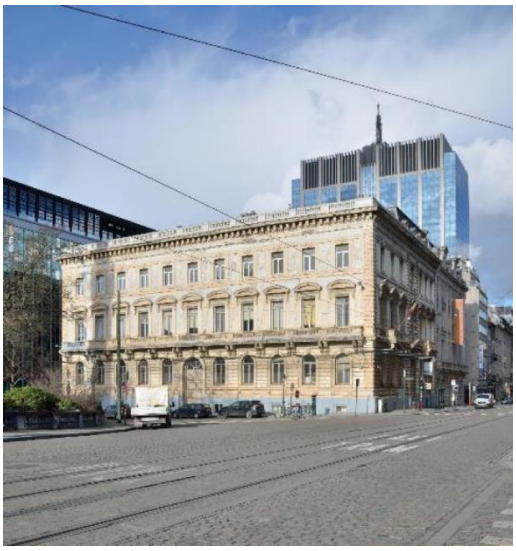

FIG. 22. *Lever House*, on the corner of Place du Congrès and Rue Royale, Brussels. (Photo: Urban.brussels)

There are numerous locations and buildings in the city that provided the setting for the political, economic, cultural or social realities of the colonial past, whether or not these are visible or invisible today. The Lever House on the Rue Royale, has also been a site of 'colonial action', just as the *Lever Brothers* factories in Forest are also intertwined with the colonial dimension of an international soap company, which, by means of a concession, was involved in the large-scale extraction of palm oil in Belgian Congo. However, some buildings, such as the Lever House, also functioned more specifically as *intentional* representations of an organisation involved in colonial exploitation, and today bear witness to a specific portrayal of that organisation and of colonialism at a well-defined point in history. The Lever House is a distinct and prominent example of this – although it should be noted at once that its distinctive architectural representation is primarily in the interior and is barely visible in the urban landscape today. This is not uncommon – numerous colonial administration headquarters, associations, corporate offices and other actors in and around the Quartier Royale were housed in representative

buildings that blended into the classicism of the cityscape. We must therefore read them '*against the grain*' to recognise their link to colonialism. In the case of the Lever House, integrated sculptures representing Congolese 'betray' the colonial layer in the building complex which, however, must be read as a whole, including with regard to its historical use.

Today, the building also cannot be read from the public space as a site with a colonial heritage, as it is not marked as such. The Lever House is, however, discussed during thematic city walks – for example *The Decolonisation Trail* (Catherine 2019) or the walking tour through the Quartier Royale organised by the association *Bakushinta* – as a significant document and as a symbolic location: Lever has become a symbol for the continuity of colonial predatory exploitation even after the Belgian takeover of the colony, while Lever's Sunlight soap that made its appearance in all households is also a typical example of 'banal colonialism' (cf. *Section 2.4.1*.). Parts of the exterior of this building had been protected since 1977 based on the idea of preserving the area in the vicinity of the Congress Column. In 2020, the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region took the initiative to extend the protection to the totality of the building, including the interior, because of the artistic value of the architecture and of the artistic elements used in the building, and especially because of the historical-documentary value of the building as a representative corporate seat and colonial propaganda tool of *Lever Brothers* (BCR Protection Decree of 5 February 2021, the annex to which included a discussion of that historical and artistic value and formed one of the sources for this analysis).

The Lever House is located at Rue Royale 150-152, but is most visible from its façade on the Place du Congrès, while there is also a 'rear façade' on the Rue Vandermeulen. The design of Joseph Poelaert's Congress Column went hand in hand with the realisation of a larger monumental urban project, which provided an integrated framework for this national monument to the modern Belgian constitution and to King Leopold I, and which also responded to the gradient of elevation between Brussels' lower and upper city. Two mansions with identical exteriors (by the architect Jean-Pierre Cluysenaar) that now line the square were built in 1850 and 1852: neoclassical *palazzi* with neo-Renaissance elements – in keeping with a dominant style at the time. Between 1919 and 1922, the building was thoroughly rebuilt and redesigned twice by the same important Brussels architect Paul Saintenoy (also a grandson of Cluysenaar), who developed an eclectic practice in the interwar period, to serve as a corporate headquarters. In 1919, the building was purchased by the *Banque Transatlantique belge* and enlarged (1919-1920) by the incorporation of the neighbouring mansion (no. 152) and by an extension towards the Rue Vandermeulen. The building was reorganised around an interior hall with counters under a glazed ceiling.

Lever Brothers bought the building after the bank failed. Thus, in 1921, after renovation, the building became the seat of *les Savonneries Lever Frères* (already founded in 1900 as a Belgian company with British owners) and of the *Société anonyme des Huileries du Congo Belge* (HCB, founded by *Lever* in 1911): the Lever House. Later, in 1930, the company became *Huilever* and finally, as a result of a merger, *Unilever* (*Unimargarine-Lever*). The HCB had its offices on the Rue Montoyer and in 1958, the Belgian Lever headquarters was also moved there.

In 1921, the rebuilding of the complex for Lever was again entrusted to Saintenoy. This included a major redesign of a monumental formal entrance hall. Among other things,

the hall is notable due to the fact that its floor and walls are fully lined with rich marble of various colours and origins that is very similar to the marble used in parts of the Museum of Congo in Tervuren which designed fifteen years earlier by the French architect Charles Girault, including with regard to the combination of these natural stone walls and the niches containing colonial statues, such as also in the museum's rotunda. The company and designer appear to have made a conscious choice to associate with this imagery. Furthermore, Saintenoy's renovation also included the installation of a cinema room and a museum, which were accessed directly from the Rue Royale by a second entrance and an interior passageway.

Nothing of the cinema interior and the museum are preserved today except the spatial layout, but they are clearly visible on the architectural plans. Not only did the architecture and ornamental finishes (including sculptures) function as carriers of Lever's self-image as a colonial operator, but the building also served as a place and provided the infrastructure for activities of colonial corporate propaganda: exhibition displays in the 'museum' and the projection of films in the 'cinema' (cf. *infra*).

When Congo was taken over by the Belgian state, it was said that henceforth no large territories would be given in concession. Yet in 1911, the Belgian government expropriated the Pende peoples of 7500 km^2 of land (representing one-fourth of the surface area of Belgium) and awarded to *the N.V. Huileries du Congo Belge*, HCB (legally Belgian but with predominantly British capital) a de facto monopoly for the exploitation of palm forests (*Elaeis*) over more than 39,000 km^2 (1.3 times the area of the 'mother country'). The Congolese population there was driven out into smaller zones. In 1911, Emile Vandervelde had given his agreement to the establishment of *Huileries du Congo Belge* in Belgian Congo and the Belgian Workers' Party obtained a seat in the HCB.

William Lever had followed Stanley's travels. His first contact with Belgium was in 1888 during the International Exhibition. He presented his soaps there. In 1889, he established a sales agency in Brussels and two depots in Antwerp. N.V. *Savonneries Lever Frères* was founded in 1900 and the first factory was opened in Forest on 8 July 1905. Lever had a motto: '*Do a beautiful job by doing the right thing!'* He wanted his employees to develop the consciousness that they were noble people and not mere machines. This is also why, near Liverpool, the paternalistic entrepreneur built Port Sunlight, the working-class city (and *'garden city' avant la lettre*). In the Congolese province of Kwilu, Leverville (nowadays Lusanga) was built. Once a local foodstuff, palm oil was now transformed into a major export product by means of large-scale Congolese forced labour. Men and women, as well as children and the sick, were forced to harvest imposed quotas of palm nuts for meagre wages, with which they had to pay the head tax to the colonial administration. This was accompanied by physical brutality. A French physician, Paul Raingeard, condemned the inhumane conditions in which Congolese workers worked in the area. His report formed the basis of a major crisis in the Belgian Parliament between 1932 and 1933, during which Emile Vandervelde demanded an end to forced labour (already abolished in theory). In 2008, Raingeard's family published the posthumous book *Maudit soit Canaan* that Raingeard had written in the 1930s.

At Lever House, the cinema and museum were used for publicity and colonial propaganda purposes. In 1925, the company director, Mr. Périer, recalled the principles of Lever's museum project: 'To show the public and young people in particular the current

Congo, to awaken colonial vocations in young people and finally to teach them about the material riches of the colony' (Vints 1984: 61-63, as cited in BHG in the above-mentioned annex to the 2020 Decree, translated by *). The black bronze statues of Congolese in the two niches of the *vestibule d'honneur* are known (in the protection decree) as 'a woman holding an oar' and 'a hunter' and are by Isodore De Rudder and Paul Wissaert respectively. The statue of the woman holding an oar, in a painted plaster version, was also part of the group '*Pêcheurs Bangala*' at the 1897 World's Fair – thereby illustrating continuities across decades, and between official and private colonial imagery. In the bronze version at the Lever House, palm nuts are added, lying at the feet of the female figure. Palm nuts are also present at the feet of the male figure of the other statue, who therefore may not represent a hunter, but a forced labourer involved in the harvesting of palm nuts. In his right hand, he holds a machete, an indispensable tool for cutting the palm bunches and loosening the fruit, and in his left hand a long stick for pricking the bunches and dropping them. The woman carries the bunches, which she must clean and she must break the nuts to extract the palm kernels.

FIG. 23. *Lever House*, black bronze statues in the *vestibule d'honneur*. (Photo: Urban.brussels)

Lucas Catherine (2019: 61) reads both figures as '*workers of the Pende tribe harvesting palm nuts*' – much of the Pende population had been forcibly led away to work for the *Huileries du Congo Belge* in the sparsely populated region it exploited. The images therefore allow us to bring up a history of rebellion and the violent suppression of it. This is usually called the 'Pendé revolt', even though it would be more apt to refer to it as 'resistance'. It was one of the increasing number of riots that took place in the 1930s. Members of the Pende people revolted in 1931, in the context of an international financial crisis following the Wall Street stock market crash and at a time when the State had increased taxes and the *Huileries* had reduced the amount paid per kilogram of palm oil.

Men from the Pende people began to flee villages to escape recruiters from *Huileries du Congo belge*. Recruiters forced the men back to work by taking women, children and the elderly hostage – practices commonly called '*sukulabuala*', in other words 'sweeping the village clean' (Sikitele 2015). Once this occurred, men began to arm themselves.

On 14 May 1931, the regional administrator, Burnotte, arrived in Kilamba to collect taxes. The men refused to work and fled. Burnotte then had most of the women taken hostage and everything of value confiscated. Burnotte and other HCB recruiters began drinking together in Kilamba. Five men raped women. The women were released after three days. A woman had been raped by a man named Collignon. Matemo à Kalengo, the woman's husband, confronted Collignon a few days later and asked him for compensation, as was the custom among Pende. Collignon refused and Matemo was physically tackled by Collignon and HCB employees. Thereupon, Collignon filed a complaint against Matemo without stating the reason.

Subsequently, the district commissioner, Maximilien Balot, was sent out to collect taxes and to investigate what had happened. He arrived in Kilamba on 8 June. During a confrontation between villagers led by Matemo, a Pende man was wounded by the shot fired by a soldier. In the ensuing battle with Matemo and his allies, Balot was killed. During the repression by a subsequent punitive expedition, at least 500 to 1,000 Pende were killed, according to sources. Many men were sentenced to death by a war crimes tribunal; others received prison sentences. The colonial government 'decapitated' the Pende society and replaced Pende chiefs with head men whom the Pende people considered collaborators (Weiss et al. 2016, Henriet 2021).

This complexity of historical reality is absent in the symbolic representation in the entrance hall, but there are starting points for developing it: the location of this company headquarters in a very representative place in the vicinity of government institutions, of banks and companies such as the *Société Genérale de Belgique* further down the Rue Royale allows to discuss the collaborations between State and (international) capital in the colony and the 'motherland'; the architecture and artworks of the vestibule and the memory of the museum and cinema provide an opportunity to discuss the historical reality of colonial propaganda. The Lever House further provides an opportunity to look at decoloniality when one knows that *Feronia Inc.* had taken over part of Lever's former plantations in Congo and was continuing forms of colonial exploitation there. However, the company was supported by what was then BIO, the Belgian public investment company for developing countries, European development banks and the Belgian Federal Public Service for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. The work of the artist Renzo Martens and the *Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise* (CATPC) from the Leverville area also draws attention to the colonial and post-colonial exploitation of the local population.

4.3.3.2. Hôtel van Eetvelde

The listed Hôtel van Eetvelde in Brussels (built in stages between 1895 and 1901) is one of the masterpieces of Art Nouveau in general and of Victor Horta in particular. Along with Horta's house and studio in Saint-Gilles, the Hôtel Tassel in Brussels City and the Hôtel Solvay in Ixelles, it is one of four mansions designed by Horta in Brussels to be included on the UNESCO World Heritage List based on three criteria. The houses are:

- works of human creative genius representing the highest expression of the influential art nouveau style in art and architecture;
- an exceptional testimony to Art Nouveau, which at the end of the 19th century represented a decisive step in the evolution of architecture in the West and prefiguring subsequent developments;
- outstanding examples of Art Nouveau architecture brilliantly illustrating the transition from the 19th to the 20th century in art, thought and society (UNESCO 2000).

FIG. 24. Hôtel van Eetvelde, view on the main hall and the winter garden. (Photo: Urban.brussels)

Of the four houses, the Hôtel van Eetvelde has the most pronounced colonial character. This is a direct result of the fact that the client and occupant of this mansion was Edmond van Eetvelde. As Secretary General of the Congo Free State, Edmond van Eetvelde was the closest collaborator of Leopold II in his capacity as owner and monarch of that state. He governed Congo from 1885, initially as head of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Justice, before concentrating all the responsibilities of the central government in his hands and being appointed sole Secretary of State in 1894. He remained in this prominent role until 1901. In addition to his ministerial positions, he served on the

executive committees of numerous companies, including the *Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo supérieur aux Grands Lacs africains* and the *Banque de Bruxelles*.

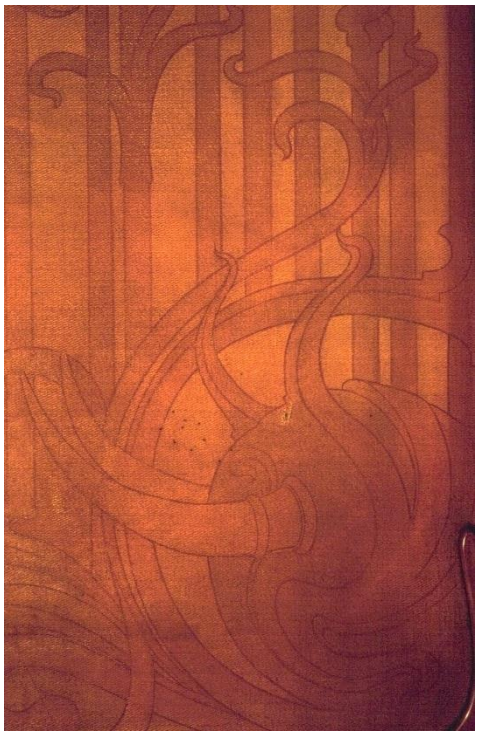

FIG. 25. Hôtel van Eetvelde, detail of the wallpaper in the dining room.
(Photo: Urban.brussels)

Hôtel van Eetvelde acted as a thoughtful propaganda tool. Indeed, the central, light-flooded octagonal hall, which so revolutionised the structure of the plan and the perception of space, and for which this building is (today) best known in architectural history, served, along with the adjacent salon, as an extensive reception area. The building also made abundant use of Congolese wood and ivory – its particular use of materials further includes visible structural use of steel – and it included elements that referenced Congolese nature and the star of the Congo Free State. Van Eetvelde used it in his capacity as an employee of Leopold II who, incidentally, visited the house regularly. Throughout the building, Horta sculpted woods from Congo into sinuous, burgeoning plant forms, used them for the structure of the furniture and in minute details of wallpaper motifs and door handles, and depicted Congolese fauna and flora in the swirling, grassy leaves of the stained glass windows and murals. In the dining room, he had orchid-like flowers engraved in the mahogany fittings above the fireplace, one of which has the star of Congo Free State, while on the opposite wall in the panelling, the outline of an elephant with tusks has been painted (Sacks 2017: 122-123).

Seen from the street, the Hôtel van Eetvelde is not immediately readable as a colonial trace, but as a prominent urban heritage site it is particularly interesting and suitable to thematise the complex entanglements between (certain) art nouveau works and colonial history, with reference to networks of patrons, financing, representative use, iconography, and the use of materials.

4.4. Artworks in the public realm

4.4.1. Runaway black slaves are attacked by dogs

Avenue Louise, developed from 1859 onwards as a promenade between the city of Brussels and the Bois de la Cambre, widens in its southernmost segment (between the roundabout and the Bois de la Cambre). At the initiative of the then Duke of Brabant, later to become King Leopold II, this segment was executed as a wide promenade with a central avenue 29 metres wide, decorated with flower beds and statues, and with footpaths and side avenues on either side. One of the sculptures that were sited there – in this case three decades later – is a sculpture showing an escaped and chained

enslaved black person protecting his son from two dogs. In terms of composition, it is reminiscent of the sculpture group *Laocoon and his Sons*, one of the showpieces in the Vatican's collections, and Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux's sculpture *Ugolin and his sons*, which represents a tyrant from Pisa. The content of the work is inspired by a scene from the novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by the American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe.

In Chapter 19, the runaway Scipio is cornered by dogs in a swamp. In the novel, Scipio runs away from his white master. In addition to whips and chains, dogs were used in the United States to discipline enslaved black people. However, the statue's French name, *Nègres marrons surpris par des chiens,* refers to Maroons, enslaved black people who throughout North and South America and the Caribbean fled slavery by settling in areas difficult for white people to access, including swamps, where they managed to live segregated from white society for generations.

Beecher Stowe's novel was published in 1852, a total of nine years before the American Civil War broke out and was also very popular in Belgium. The plaster version of the statue made by Louis Samain in 1869, four years after the end of the American Civil War, stands in the Palais de Justice. When he presented the sculpture at the Brussels Salon in 1869, it caused a sensation. The Belgian State purchased the marble version and offered it to the City of Brussels, which installed it on the Avenue Louise in 1895.

FIG. 26. *Runaway Slaves attacked by Dogs*, avenue Louise, Brussels. (Louis Samain, 1869) (Photo: Urban.brussels, 2006)

With the rise of the civil rights movement in the United States, the reputation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* swung the other way. Since then, the main character has been seen as the prototype of the kind of enslaved person who meets the expectations of white people by acting submissively towards them. That analysis is even more true of Scipio than of Uncle Tom himself. The white slave owner Augustine St. Clare, who tells the story of Scipio, describes him as a true African lion, born in Africa, with an innate desire for freedom, who was constantly resold because no one could do anything with him. One day, when, after attacking a supervisor, he ran away and hid in a swamp, St. Clare managed to get his brother, Alfred, who owned Scipio, to say that he would be prepared to sell Scipio to him if he could tame him. The chase was initiated with dogs that could locate Scipio. Scipio killed three of them with his bare hands but was finally brought to the ground by a gunshot. According to St. Clare, he managed to tame Scipio by tending to his wounds himself. After he had recovered, Scipio refused the freedom papers that St. Clare offered him and voluntarily entered his service. He converted to Christianity and, in St. Clare's words, became 'as gentle as a child'. When St. Clare contracted cholera, all his slaves fled except for Scipio who nursed him, in turn contracted cholera himself and died. Beecher Stowe and St. Clare (in the novel as staunch an opponent of slavery as the

author herself) leave no doubt that they consider the ideal relationship between white and black Americans to be one that exists between a generous master and a grateful, docile servant.

Samain's sculpture denounces the violence with which fugitive slaves were hunted down, without commenting on the American slave trade as such, without criticising Beecher Stowe's ideas about the relationship between white and black Americans, and without depicting the slave traders who had sent the dogs after the enslaved father and his son. While historical or mythical figures in the European art tradition could be depicted both as victims, such as Laocoon and his sons, and as heroes, there is not a single statue of a historical, fictional or mythical black hero in all of Belgium. Samain's sculpture reduces the audience to passive consumers of the aestheticisation of shocking violence without any contextualisation. It is a form of pornographic violence that confirms the great divide that supposedly exists between black victims and white onlookers and invites the audience to feel superior to American slave owners. This is without having to come face to face with the involvement of Brussels bankers and traders in the transatlantic slave trade during the 18th century or the involvement of the Congo Free State in the slave trade in Congo on the east or west coast. The statue was made and displayed after the end of the American Civil War that ended slavery, and it was placed in its current location after the end of the war between the Congo Free State and Arabo-Swahili slave traders.

In 2020, local residents launched a petition to demand the removal of the statue, which they say has no place in a public space and would be better housed in a museum. According to the office of Mayor of the City of Brussels, Philippe Close, the issue should be discussed in the overall context of the debate on decolonising public space in the Brussels Parliament.

4.4.2. The archer

FIG. 27. *The archer* by A. Dupagne, avenue du Front in Etterbeek, inaugurated in 1962. (Photo: Urban.brussels, 2021)

During the colonial period, Arthur Dupagne established a reputation based on his often monumental sculptures depicting Congolese that were exhibited in Belgium, Congo and elsewhere. Some of them are preserved in the Museum of Ixelles, the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren and the *Musée de l'art wallon* in Liège.

This sculpture by him was placed on the Avenue du Front in Etterbeek in 1962, one year after the artist's death, during the same year that Rwanda and Burundi became independent and two years after Congo gained its independence. Strictly speaking, the sculpture is not an example of colonial propaganda because it was placed in the public realm after Congo's independence. Nevertheless, it cannot be separated from colonial propaganda: as is the case with

some of the protected sculptures in the large rotunda of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren that were installed after Congo's independence, its iconography is undilutedly colonial and racist.

It shows a young, half-naked black man hunting with a bow. The pose of the half-kneeling black man on the hunt contrasts sharply with the urban environment without animals in which the sculpture was placed. The location is indeed important: the statue stands near the Place du Roi Vainqueur where the Résidence Katanga was built to house Belgian settlers after their return following Congo's independence. Indeed, most former Belgian settlers had lived in the former province of Katanga, which was the centre of industry in Belgian Congo and had seceded from the new Congolese state in 1960, with the support of the Belgian state and the *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* which dominated the industry. In Katanga's industrial centres, however, no hunters snuck around, looking for prey. The statue gives a threatening impression and suggested that even after independence, former Belgian colonial subjects were still 'uncivilised' and needed to be 'civilised' by Belgians (Dewilde 2021; Stanard 2019: 158). It therefore emphasises the perceived 'otherness' of black people in relation to the white audience for whom it was installed. As such, it is an example of imperialist nostalgia (cf. *Section 4.2.2.*) that endured after Congo's independence. According to Véronica Curto, the sculpture was therefore supposed to lend a kind of '*nostalgic colonial charm*' to the neighbourhood and its new residents. In the meantime however, the neighbourhood is mainly inhabited by people of foreign origin who have nothing to do with the colonial past (Curto 2018: 27). As such, the statue has passed its expiration date.

4.4.3. The carillon on the Mont des Arts

The carillon on the Palais des Congrès was designed by the Brussels architect Jules Ghobert. The bell of the carillon features male characters said to be representative of Belgium: eight specific characters from Belgian history (Jacob Van Artevelde, Godfrey de Bouillon, Philip the Good, the Count of Egmont, Charles V the Emperor, Jean-Joseph Charlier and Peter Paul Rubens), three unknown Belgians (a Gaul, a soldier and a workman) and a Congolese (a 'tam-tam player'). The stereotypical image of the anonymous Congolese drummer representing a country some 80 times larger than Belgium and with a much greater cultural diversity than Belgium stands in stark contrast to the historical figures who represent Belgium. As such, it creates the impression that that all of Congo's cultures can be reduced to the image of 'the tam-tam player' and that Congo has no history, only a timeless tradition. As such, the carillon is highly problematic.

4.5. Colonial figures?

4.5.1. Charles Buls as a colonial figure?

Charles Buls was mayor of Brussels from 1881 to 1899 at a time when the tension between major new urban projects and the need to preserve historic heritage expressed itself through the difference between Leopold II's urbanist projects and Charles Buls's policy of preserving historic neighbourhoods and restoring and even reconstructing

historic buildings. Buls resigned as mayor in protest at Leopold II's decision to demolish the St. Roch neighbourhood in order to create the Mont des Arts.

At the same time, however, Buls had nothing but praise for Leopold II's administration of the Congo Free State. After his official visit to Congo in 1898, he founded the *Oeuvre des Bibliothèques congolaises* to provide colonial agents with reading material and entertainment. In 1905, he contributed more than 150 books to the network of about a hundred libraries that existed in the Congo Free State, but his initiative came to an end when public libraries were established in 1910 (Kadima-Nzuji 2000: 241). Buls made propaganda for the Congo Free State with his travel book *Croquis congolais* (1899) in which he attributed Congo's economic potential to the intelligent despotism of Leopold II. Among other things, he described black people as members of an inferior "race", 'primitive[s]', and *'half devil, half child [= mi-diable, mi-enfant] […], [qui] se trouve, dans l'ordre moral et intellectuel à une place intermédiaire entre l'animal le plus intelligent, et l'homme blanc'* ('half devils, half children who situate[d] themselves intellectually and morally between the most intelligent animal and the white man', translated by *). It was said that they were still in the early stages of the development of human cultures and recognised the superiority of white people. He viewed them as undeniable tools for the exploitation of Africa and warned that these tools must be used rather than abused or they would disappear. He also minimised criticism of Leopold II's reign. Undoubtedly, the use of untrained or unskilled agents could lead to situations of abuse, but based on his personal observations, he decided that the State did not tolerate this (Buls 1899).

Buls corresponded with the Polish-British author Joseph Conrad (Arnold 2009) who entered into employment with Albert Thys in the Congo Free State and became famous for his 1899 novella *Heart of Darkness* (translated as *Hart der Duisternis*), about a white agent in Congo Free State. Buls dedicated *Croquis congolais* to Albert Thys. It was one of the many travelogues through Congo that were published at the time and during the period of Belgian Congo. Not all of those publications had a major impact, but successive publications had a cumulative impact.

Many folkloric associations keep alive the memory of Buls who was popular as mayor. His enduring popularity is also evidenced by the fact that two streets and four schools bear his name and that he is the subject of a commemorative plaque on the Grand Place (1899), a monument – with the mayor Emile Demot – in Ixelles, and a fountain depicting him with his dog on the Place de l'Agora in Brussels City. This popularity is based entirely on his achievements as mayor (which went beyond his policy of nurturing historic Brussels) and as an education reformer, and has no bearing on either his travel book or his creation of the *Oeuvre des Bibliothèques congolaises*.

Buls's ideas about Congolese were undoubtedly shared by the vast majority of white Belgians at the time.

This means that it is necessary to consider three individual factors:

- Were the creation of the *Oeuvre des Bibliothèques congolaises* and the publication of *Croquis congolais* of the same order as physical and symbolic outrages committed against Congolese during that period?
- What was the social impact of these actions in the short and long term?
- Do they outweigh his significance as Mayor of Brussels and as an education reformer?

4.5.2. King Baudouin as a colonial figure?

Henri Lenaerts designed two busts of King Baudouin (1930-1993): one that has stood at the entrance to the Parc Roi Baudouin at Rue Eugène Toussaint in Jette since 1982 and another that has stood in front of the Cathedral of Saint Michael and Saint Gudula in Brussels since 1996. Elisabeth Barmarin designed the statue that has stood since 1996 on Place Charles Lagrange at the main entrance to the Royal Observatory Uccle and the bronze relief of the King that was inaugurated in 1998 at the King Baudouin metro station.

Of the four statues, as far as we know, only the bust in front of the cathedral was ~~vandalised~~, in 2020 to be precise: it was covered with red paint and the word '*réparations*' was written in red paint on the pedestal. King Baudouin was very popular during his lifetime and in the years after his death. However, his reputation was dented after the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the Lumumba case ruled in 2002 that he had exceeded his constitutional powers in the case. This may explain why one of his statues was defaced in 2020.

4.6. How can one identify traces that are absent, or are difficult or impossible to see or read?

Mapping, inventorying and valorising traces that refer, for example, to the history of the presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians and Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian origin in the public space is not an easy task: it is a long-term task that requires a combination of reading of existing sources, conducting new archival research (in official archives and private archives and libraries), oral history and anthropological/sociological fieldwork and a collaboration between different actors, from academic experts to experiential and amateur historians (cf. *Chapter 7*).

CHAPTER 5 (PARTIAL) STRATEGIES FOR DECOLONISING BRUSSELS' PUBLIC SPACE

This chapter discusses possible actions that could become part of a decolonisation policy of public space. At the end of the chapter, a typology of possible interventions in colonial memorials and other colonial traces in public space is discussed, but this overview is preceded by two major reflections that make clear that the decolonisation work cannot be reduced to, and should not be misunderstood, as the punctual 'correction' of the existing monumental representations from the colonial regime.

Indeed, decolonisation interventions in public spaces - action with regard to monuments, street names, historical traces - require parallel decolonisation actions in other (policy) domains other than just the management of physical public space and the heritage therein. An interplay between various actors will always also be needed: civil society, politicians and administrations, and the wider population, but also, for example, between heritage caretakers, historians and creators of new representations. This process is just as important as the result, which is never a 'solution' but another step in an ongoing process of decolonisation - of letting decolonial turmoil play out - and transformation of urban space.

In addition, it is also important not to approach the colonial monuments and memory sites in the Brussels public space purely as individual objects, but to frame the object, site or specific work within a coherent approach that makes the overall result, at the level of the whole city, more than the random sum of individual actions. The different actions and interventions can reinforce each other and create a decolonised public space in the Brussels urban landscape - paying attention to the contents at the level of the whole city, but also to the spatial embedding of existing and new traces and symbols in the urban fabric.

5.1 A desirable interplay of (policy) actions and actors

5.1.1 Decolonisation of public space is not unrelated to decolonial and reparative policies in numerous policy domains

Decolonisation of public space as a representational space is important in its own right, but must also be understood as a contribution to a social and policy process of decoloniality and reparation in numerous domains.

Decolonisation of the public sphere will also only be powerful and credible if it is accompanied by decolonial policies in numerous policy domains, from the restitution of looted property, through the fight against racism and discrimination, to foreign policy.

5.1.2 Decolonisation of public space should be flanked by the dissemination of historical knowledge and social reflection, but it is a political matter for the present and the future

Interventions relating to existing colonial traces and symbols in public space should be seen as interventions at the level of the inscription of collective (appreciative) remembrance (*mémoire*) in public space. These interventions are part of a broader decolonisation process of the inherited and pervasive historical collective image of Belgian colonisation. Historical research, publications, and education (*histoire*) are the other necessary component. Knowledge of the history of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi and of colonial history (and its after-effects) should also inform contemporary interventions on colonial traces and symbols.

Indeed, the critical evaluation of the inherited 'monumental image' of Belgian colonial history - from statues to street names to immovable heritage - must first be nourished and tested by scientific historical knowledge about the colonial historical reality. Historical untruths may be an important reason for rejecting a symbolic representation in public space, just as historical knowledge will provide a basis and review framework for any alternative representations and subjects for intentional memorials to colonial history. This critical historical knowledge building about the colonial past must itself be done from a decolonial consciousness, and access to this knowledge must also become as free as possible.

At the same time, monuments - bearers of memory, rather than history - can never be expected to convey by themselves a complex historical understanding of colonial history, with both a sense of structural dynamics and nuances, in the way that historical research, books, documentaries, or exhibitions, can. Intervention at the level of intentional urban colonial traces will therefore not be sufficient to accomplish decolonising the inherited, officially created 'colonial consciousness.' A broader, shared historical knowledge is also necessary in order to avoid reducing the Belgian colonial 'burden of inheritance' to one of 'evil individuals', and to understand systemic dimensions, and critically reflect on similarities and differences between the colonial reality and contemporary society, including in terms of economic development and racist ideology.

Interventions are also best done with historical knowledge and critical analysis of the history of colonial representations in Brussels and in Belgium (*histoire de la mémoire coloniale*). What were the historical circumstances and motivations behind the creation and interpretation of the colonial memorials that are being questioned today? Just as their critical evaluation today is embedded in an interplay of social developments, this was also the case when each of these commemorative symbols was introduced. A good historical understanding of the use of monuments (statues, street names and other memorials) by the official colonial system and by other actors, for example, can provide insight into the institutional structures and actors behind their creation - e.g. the *Ligue du Souvenir Congolais* (cf. *§3.3.9.1.*) - and the political motives and ideological conceptions behind them - mainly pro-colonial propaganda, nationalist consciousness, legitimisation of colonisation as a 'civilisation offensive', racism such as in the depiction of black Africans as inferior to white Europeans, etc. The interplay with other channels of pro-colonial (propagandistic) discourse and with broader historical factors, can also be better

understood thanks to a broader and critical knowledge of colonial history. Understanding how the broader public interpreted colonial memorials and whether or not they were attached to, accepted, or opposed them, at the time of their creation and later, is also important.

Yet a critical review of (intentional) colonial memorials in public space should never be limited solely to considerations from historical-scientific or social-scientific perspectives. Indeed, the symbolic marking of public space is never merely a practice in memory. And a social evaluation of the desirability and appropriateness of these markers is never an evaluation that can be made purely from the historical discipline, but is ultimately a political, social matter for contemporary society. This concerns governments and policymakers, and the broad 'civic society' including the work of associations of persons of Sub-Saharan African descent, other civil society organisations, activists, and intellectuals, including historians and artists. The revision of memorial representations of the colonial past should also go hand in hand with social processing (*Aufarbeitung*) of the colonial past.

5.1.3. Decolonising interventions related to colonial traces and symbols should be accompanied by more diversity in the persons and groups represented in public spaces.

Decolonising Brussels' public space, with its colonial symbols, will not suffice to correct the absent representation of diversity. The very diverse composition of the population in Brussels and in Belgium in general - in terms of diverse historical migration backgrounds, but also in terms of religion, gender and sexuality, etc. - requires a representation policy that can support and strengthen the decolonisation policy.

The historical memory and representation of individuals and groups from the former Belgian colonies and mandate territories - Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi - automatically enters the agenda for an official decolonial review of monumental representations of Belgian colonial history. Other migration histories and representations of Belgian residents with migration backgrounds and other minority groups would also merit policy attention, but this is beyond the remit of the Working Group.

5.1.4. Unofficial and official action

Both in critically intervening in existing colonial traces and symbols in the public space, and in putting in place new ones, an intervention can occur officially - in the name of an official government - or unofficially, without an official mandate. This distinction does not necessarily coincide with what is permissible, or punishable - cf. *Chapter 6* for more explanation of this. Both types of interventions have their place in a contemporary, democratic culture:

- *Unofficial interventions* are often quick, mobilising and politicising and respond to the debate, but also polarising; they sometimes want to use activism to incite official action. Usually, however, they are short-lived, ephemeral and vulnerable. Interventions are made anonymously or on behalf of individuals, organisations or

social groups. Without official support, they can never embody official representation on their own.

E.g. putting up paper street signs to campaign for a Square Patrice Lumumba in Ixelles, but also expressions of graffiti culture, or painting contested statues red.

- *Official interventions* can be ephemeral or permanent. They have the weight of official recognition and take place on behalf of a government and the society it represents. Rather, they express a (slower) evolving consensus. They can, however, build on unofficial initiatives, or be developed with actors who are also involved in unofficial actions.

  E.g. the integration of the in situ artwork *Ombres* (Freddy Tsimba, 2016) into the Memorial Hall of the renovated Royal Museum for Central Africa.

The critical evaluation of the colonial representative apparatus, and decolonising the public sphere, today call for official interventions after years of mainly activist, unofficial initiatives (cf. *Chapter 1*). This requires a politically and socially supported mandate from the Belgian state, the Brussels-Capital Region or the various municipalities. The interventions will be more meaningful as they are accompanied by the clear public development and official pronouncement of the social significance of this review - in a parliament, in an opening speech, in a publication - for the accumulated collective memory about the colonial period, and for contemporary society and the future.

Political decision-making requires processes of broad democratic participation and public debate, both from the urban or national population, in whose name an official initiative is taken, and from the various groups that are stakeholders in the contemporary reviewing of colonial historical representation. This includes not only individuals and organisations from Sub-Saharan African diasporas, but also organisations with a historical role in colonial history.

The necessary official interventions, however, will not mean the end of political or activist protesting and mobilisation. This should always be permitted in a democratic public space. But the official transformation of public space in a decolonial and inclusive sense, will reduce the need for protest in the form of ~~vandalism~~, and can create a public space that more residents can appropriate.

5.1.5. Traditional and new ‘heritage carers’

Heritage care work by historians, archaeologists, art historians, and conservation architects is structurally focused on the conservation of historical and artistic heritage, not its questioning. Modern historic preservation is also primarily focused on 'art and historical heritage' - its inventory, preservation, management, and restoration - rather than on intentional memorials and the issues surrounding their creation, updating, or removal or on the emotional attachment people feel to certain buildings, neighbourhoods, etc.

Decolonising colonial symbols in public spaces, therefore, requires an 'extended heritage practice' in which actors and policy instruments of official heritage care are challenged and cooperate with actors and policy initiatives on issues such as urban diversity, and in which contemporary cultural and artistic practices also have a place.

This does not imply a threat to heritage and heritage practice, but an enrichment thereof. Ever since the 1990s, heritage theorists have been calling for the questioning of the disciplinary authority, valuation frameworks, and exclusive control of official heritage care ('*authorised heritage practices*' of (art) historians and technical conservation) in order to recognise the heritage involvement of other social groups ('*unauthorised heritage practices*'), and to emancipate them into heritage care.[10] One form that an extended heritage practice can take consists precisely of a questioning heritage practice, in the form of critical documentation of heritage objects and sites, but also of launching proposals for interventions, or actual material/in situ interventions by artists, curators, writers and documentarians, architects, and others - referred to as '*Experimental Preservation*' in a recent book (Otero-Pailos *et.al. 2016*). The questioning here often lies in making polemically visible a social agenda, an unresolved conflict or an invisible history surrounding a concrete heritage object, up to and including questioning its preservation or the processes of caring for it.

Even when establishing new symbolic memorials or sites, or modifying existing memorials, the argument and action framework of established heritage care will not suffice. They are primarily the domain of political initiative, civil society organisations, art-in-the-public-space policy, artistic practice, etc.

5.1.6. Analysis and argument on the one hand, project dynamics on the other

Under *§5.3*, several possible interventions are discussed in general terms and argued with respect to their advantages and disadvantages in certain situations. This generalising discussion also has its limitations: insights and convincing scenarios often only develop through the creative experimentation, action and reaction of project proposals and in situ projects, which can be understood as a form of urban research, probing specific interpretations of the 'decolonisation of public space'. As a series of researchers, militants, and artists remind us in their white paper opinion piece, 'Political and artistic interventions effectively drive urban research, as much as the advice and arguments' (Vander Elst *et.al. 2020*).

Developing such project dynamics, moreover, can itself be considered a form of commemorative practice around a (contested) memorial or other trace (cf. *§5.3.1. Strategy 0.3*)

5.1.7. Shared responsibilities in official interventions

Persuasive and supported revisions of existing and new commemorative signs and traces require a collaboration of actors who, each from their role, take shared responsibility and give substance to the contemporary memorial project.

[10] In particular, in the field of *critical heritage studies* (Smith 2006).

5.1.7.1. Politics and administration

Just because the revision of colonial traces in public space aims to become an official revision, the result of an activist or artistic action - for example, the red paint on Storms' bust - cannot suffice on its own. At least an official endorsement is needed: a reasoned administrative decision by the competent authorities (and best expressed through a speech or similar, or otherwise expressed publicly by those who are mandated), in which a link is made between the analysis of the various dimensions, the policy consideration and stakes for society, and the decision for this particular review. A government then takes responsibility and commissions the development of an intervention.

5.1.7.2. Interest Groups

Local residents, Sub-Saharan African associations, and other stakeholder representatives in the renegotiation of colonial memory in public spaces should be centrally involved in the decision-making process.

5.1.7.3. Designers

Eventually, an artist/screenwriter/writer/(restoration) architect/theatre collective/museum institution/other 'design team' will elaborate or shape an intervention. A persuasive intervention often requires creativity and strength in (re)formulating. However, artists and designers cannot take full control and responsibility for the intervention. For the revision of a colonial memorial or other colonial trace in the public space, or the addition of an officially sanctioned new symbol, a 'creator's' own artistic and social commitment and position may well be particularly important, and even necessary, to realise a culturally compelling project. National and cultural origins may also be important: being of (Brussels)-Sub-Saharan African descent, identifying as a person of colour, may be an aspect in the credibility, and appropriateness, of an appointed artist or other designer, just as collaborations may carry special symbolism.

But the design/artistic project must also always, to some extent, be a response to (1) an official demand for representation, (2) an interpretation of a public ambition/mission, and (3) the outcome of a social process of scenario development and dialogue. It is therefore not 'free art' entrusted entirely to artists.

5.1.7.4. Research, commissioning and heritage mediation

A research and commissioning committee, in which a coordinating consultative body (at the regional or municipal level) also actively plays a role, is needed at various stages of a review process, but neither will such committee develop the desirable scenario alone and to the last detail. The Research and Commissioning Committee:

- conducts preparatory research: with the necessary historical knowledge and documentation, and in dialogue with policy, (heritage) administrations and stakeholders (including local residents) and artists/activists from civil society, for example, a synthesising critical evaluation of the historical and current significance of the monument can be made.

- formulates strategic scenarios: scenarios must be tailor-made for the concrete colonial memorial (or other trace) and must also take into account the global Brussels decolonisation project and the location of the concrete monument within the spatial and narrative web of monuments, as well as its location within the social reality of a neighbourhood and urban space today. The policy can then choose from these strategic options, with appropriate participation.
- formulates assignments: once a choice for a strategic scenario has been made, the assignment for the intervention project must be formulated precisely: what are the new ambitions with regard to meaning, the focal points and the limiting conditions for a desired intervention? This can be done with a 'project definition': a unifying document in the transition from policy choice to concrete project. It can serve as a framework for a project call for proposals from artists or designers. In addition, the project call can also be documented with an accompanying project file containing relevant information and various analyses, e.g. (art) historical research about the monument in question, or historical background related to the original or new story to which the monument refers, testimonies from neighbourhood residents, etc.

5.1.8. Act, but also always justify why

For any intervention regarding a colonial memorial, it is important to also provide motivation, ideally the publication of a publicly accessible report (including in the future), a press release, and a brief clarification (e.g. via a sign) at the site.

It is important, where appropriate, to provide both information and justification about:

- the decision process behind this intervention;
- why a particular representation was deemed too problematic to maintain unchanged;
- why the specific intervention was chosen, and its intended meaning.

5.2 Challenges and actions at the level of the whole (capital) city (outlines for a 'departure scenario')

Intentional colonial monuments do not exist in isolation, but form a colonial representational layer in the public space of the (capital) city. Today this comprises:

- a certain *coherence in content* between colonial traces (monuments and place names) themselves, as a network of connected representations and contents;
- a certain *form-spatial coherence* between individual colonial traces and the urban fabric of Brussels.

The decolonisation process for the public space must also work with these two aspects of coherence, to recognise this inherited coherence but also to deconstruct it and 'dismantle the colonial city.' This should allow the power of those two aspects of coherence to also be harnessed for a decolonial project for the public space of the whole

(capital) city.[11] The important thing is to include these two aspects when developing a policy or action plan so that the whole is more than just the sum of separate actions. In *Chapter 7*, we outlined a scenario in which this coordination occurs, which the working group believes can serve as a starting point for public debate and political decision making (but which also leaves room for variations as we move forward).

5.2.1 Towards a new coherence of content in the memory of colonial history in the public space of Brussels

Intentional colonial traces in the Brussels region are visible, but very partial and often problematic bearers of a memory of Belgian colonial history. The challenge is not only to evaluate each of them individually and make them the object of decolonial reflection and action, but also to develop in the public sphere of the capital region a coherent, decolonial and multi-voiced memory of the colonial history and its after-effects in the world and in Belgian society.

The study group is of the opinion that critical interpretation with regard to the Belgian propagandistic colonial discourse must take place in the urban public space itself, but that the public space of streets and squares cannot be the only place for this. After all, walking through the Brussels urban landscape, the visitor will only be reminded of a few (new) elements but an overview of knowledge and coherence cannot realistically be provided here.

Therefore, the commission makes three strategic recommendations, which work in a complementary manner, providing a framework for a more detailed decolonial review of the region's public space, and also fleshing out the representative importance of Brussels as the current capital of Belgium, and of Flanders and Europe.

5.2.1.1. A museum in Brussels about Belgian colonial history, about Brussels as a colonial and postcolonial city[12], and about decoloniality

A museum - an institution with a mission, financing in line with the level of ambition, staff, location with infrastructure, collection, permanent and possibly changing exhibitions, broader public activities, etc. - about Belgian colonial history, about Brussels as a colonial and postcolonial (capital) city, and about decoloniality, which is able to convey to the population and visitors of Brussels the necessary historical knowledge about this unprocessed chapter of Belgian history. The story of the museum could also underpin and frame the revisions of the monumental representations in the capital, and address the themes developed by interventions throughout the territory (cf. *§5.3.*), also in their interrelationships.

Such a museum could, at the same time, provide a meaningful destination for (some) removed statues, plaques, street signs. Once there, they can be contextualised within

[11] In the opinion piece 'Conditions minimales pour une décolonisation de l'espace public' (Vander Elst *et al.* 2020), 'Dismantling the colonial city' is one of the summary plastic descriptions used for the decolonisation challenge.

[12] The term postcolonial here refers to the presence of people of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian origin in Brussels since the end of the colonial period.

the official colonial discourse of the time, confronted with historical facts, and problematised from a contemporary decolonial perspective. (cf. *§5.3.1.III*. and *§5.3.3*.)

Today, in the Brussels-Capital Region, there is neither a museum presentation nor museum research or public outreach on Belgian colonial history, and on Brussels as a colonial and postcolonial (capital) city. Currently, the Royal Museum for Central Africa (AfricaMuseum) fills this role but only to a limited extent. Its colonial history as a propaganda and knowledge institution and its embedding in the Leopoldian imperial urban topography give this museum complex undiminished importance within the inherited colonial city and make it a key institutional player when it comes to colonial memory and decolonisation. However, this federal museum is located in the Flemish Periphery which is fused with the Brussels agglomeration, but on the territory of the Flemish region and, as a federal institution, falls outside the powers of the Brussels government and municipal authorities. It can therefore hardly become the central reference point in decolonising Brussels as an urban centre, as a Belgian and European capital with a distinctive colonial past. Also, the institutional origins (and institutional continuity) of this museum prevent it from becoming the Brussels reference site on decoloniality.

5.2.1.2. A national monument/memorial commemorating the victims of Belgian colonial exploitation, in an important, representative public space in the (capital) city

While a museum can primarily disseminate knowledge and marshal an institutional workforce, a monument/memorial allows public space to acknowledge, symbolise, and make a focal point for commemorations of colonial violence and suffering. The establishment of such a monument represents an important social gesture. It should be a part, but not an endpoint, of the decolonial processing of the colonial past and its pervasive effects.

A central memorial for the Brussels-Capital Region automatically takes on the importance of a central, national memorial for Belgium, and is therefore best established by the various Belgian authorities together.

When designing a central memorial site – a place in the space – it is best to also think about appropriate official commemorative activities – with a designated moment in time, symbolism, etc.

5.2.1.3. A coordinated transformation of the urban corpus of colonial symbols and traces (curating)

The inherited intentional colonial traces and symbols make representations and refer to contents in a way that links them together, e.g. *Rue Général Tombeur* in Etterbeek and the *Monument for Lieutenant General Tombeur* on Avenue du Parc in Saint-Gilles, and also links them to a national colonial discourse (mythology, propaganda) from the past (culminating in the interwar period, see earlier chapters).

There are also groups of similar traces and symbols, such as the plaques or monuments honouring the 'colonial pioneers' from a municipality, and of similar traces, such as the

buildings in the government neighourhood that in the past housed colonial administrations, associations, banks, or corporate offices.

It would therefore be useful, within the territory of the entire Brussels Region, to also 'curate' this stock of colonial symbols and traces in a coordinated manner, for example with a master plan/master plans:

- Through repetition of similar markings or interventions, make visible the connection between similar symbols and traces;
- Within the overall urban space, also make interventions that reinforce and complement each other's meaning;
- Deal with the different problematising themes, each within the public space of the Brussels Region, distributed among the interventions and interpretation in colonial symbols and traces, and the content of possible new symbols.

The following nine themes should each be central to a major intervention in the Region:

Exploitation
Imperialism, exploitation, extractive colonialism and economic enrichment of Belgium

Racism
Racism as colonial reality and legacy (including 'ethnographic' classifications, 'racial inferiority', segregation, stereotypes, discrimination) with a focus on gender.

Violence
Social, physical, sexual, and symbolic violence towards the people of Congo and Rwanda-Burundi

Propaganda
Propagandistic colonial discourses (myths of civilisation, progress, etc.)

Experiences
Daily experiences from the colonial period (in both the 'metropolis' and the segregated society of the colony) and their postcolonial impact, multi-voiced.

Culture
Colonialism in oral, musical, visual, and material culture, art, architecture, and infrastructure

Sub-Saharan African resistance, resistance and resilience
African opposition and resistance to colonisation, in diverse forms, including cultural (resilience)

Anti-colonial activism
(Belgian and foreign) anti-colonial activism

Sub-Saharan African presence
Representation of (a history of) Sub-Saharan African presence and diversity in Belgium and Brussels and of its contributions to the history of Belgium and Brussels, primarily in terms of people originating from Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi.

In a similar way, a more diverse representation among those remembered (e.g. for street names and other toponyms) can also be aspired to, evaluated, and followed up at the regional level.

5.2.2. Towards a layered and differentiated spatial approach

Here, we make three observations and two overall recommendations: There are important differences in the nature of public space in the city, and these should be taken into consideration:

- There are differences between the symbolic markings of streets, squares, parks, public buildings or infrastructure, by naming and/or visual representation;
- There are more and less representative public spaces (by their design, location, centre character, activities);
- There are public spaces with a predominantly local interest (municipality or even neighbourhood) e.g. the Square de la Croix-Rouge in Ixelles and others with a predominantly metropolitan or even capital/national interest, e.g. Place du Trône or the Parc du Cinquantenaire.

Second, the degree of interplay between the lay-out of the public space and the design of the colonial memorial can also vary greatly from case to case. A particular monument can be inextricably linked to the construction of a public space and the surrounding building ensemble, occupying the public space visually and symbolically (e.g. Congress Column, Leopold II's equestrian statue in Place du Trône, or the triumphal arch in the Parc du Cinquantenaire at a pivotal point in the urban-monumental complex of Leopoldian urbanism), while another colonial memorial may be, for example, just one of the colonial traces or symbols in a park or along a boulevard (e.g. Storms' bust in the de Square de Meeûs), without completely occupying the meaning of that place through their design.

Third, in the spatial distribution of colonial symbols and traces, there are both isolated instances and clusters of interrelated symbols and traces that are associated with the character and history of a neighbourhood:

- e.g. all colonial traces and symbols in and around the Parc du Cinquantenaire
- e.g. all colonial traces and symbols in the government quarter
- e.g. military colonial references linked to the military history of Etterbeek

Related to this, we make two recommendations:

Pursue a historically layered public space: the decolonial transformation of the symbolic marking of public space should also respond to the layered character of the urban space as a carrier of memory: in the city, there is both room and a need for unambiguous representations of the messages that we as a society wish to convey today, but in other places also for critical (problematising) and selective preservation of historical traces and symbols of the colonial (capital) city, as historical layers of the city. Forgotten or insufficiently known histories can also receive attention, as can the more recent postcolonial past, and the presence of former colonials and people from Congo, Rwanda and/or Burundi in (neighbourhoods of) the city.

Interventions in Brussels are needed on different scales: sometimes it makes sense on the scale of the individual symbol/trace, sometimes interventions on the scale of spatial clusters/ensembles of symbols and public spaces are needed and make more sense.

5.3 Possible interventions on the level of individual colonial symbols and traces

We discuss possible successive interventions on colonial memorials and urban spaces (*§5.3.1.*), the creation of new monuments (*§5.3.2.*), and dealing with historical traces and relics (*§5.3.3.*).

5.3.1. Dealing with colonial memorials and urban spaces

We distinguish six possible intervention strategies that can be used mainly in two different phases in decolonising public space. There are also variants and the strategies can sometimes be used in combination.

The three intervention strategies that the working group recommends be applied temporarily in anticipation of more permanent interventions are more likely to focus on social dialogue, critical interpretation, problematization, and sometimes scenario research. The Working Group considers these to be 'minimal' strategies in the short term, and broadly inadequate strategies in the longer term, and gives them a 0 sequence number:

01. Tolerate (and document) traces of protest

02. Apply critical interpretation with text and images

03. Develop other commemorative practices around it

Revising problematic colonial memorials, which are judged as unacceptable today, in a more permanent way as part of decolonising Brussels' public space will also require more radical interventions.

This concerns:

I. Removal from (this) public space and replacement

II. Reusing materials for a new representation

III. Contextualising through visual interventions (in terms of urban appearance and the message of the monument).

A. In the meantime:

Three strategies for action in anticipation of permanent interventions

0.1. Tolerate (and document) traces of protest (management regime)

When a monument has become the object of ~~vandalising~~ protest gestures, a temporary official strategy may also lie in the acceptance of these traces of protest.

- A first variant: a well-defined result of protest is 'accepted' and 'frozen', as a one-time measure.

- A second variant involves keeping the monument open to contesting gestures, either on the monument itself or in its immediate surroundings (e.g. by providing signs for people to post their comments on).

The challenge in both cases then lies in making the new management regime clear and legible, and in creating an official, corresponding framework (cf. *Chapter 6*). It must also be clear that they apply to these selected monuments and not others, and an appropriate maintenance strategy for the sculpture/structure must also be found (what to clean, what not to clean?).

The Working Group recommends that the preservation of traces of protest be retained only as a temporary strategy, but not as a permanent official solution. This is because it becomes untenable to clearly delineate and limit this regime to well-defined monuments and because transgressive protest must be allowed to remain truly transgressive protest.

Example:

- The marble bust of Auguste Storms in the Square de Meeûs was covered in red paint after the Black Lives Matter protests. This act can then be judged from the official side as a meaningful gesture, as an appropriate expression of the social protest to venerating the memory of Storms, and of colonial heroes by extension. In this case, it could also be argued that the gesture made was communicatively clear and aesthetically convincing, and a decision could have been made to temporarily freeze it in its altered state. The applied paint would then have become accepted (at least temporarily) as an additional historical layer of the monument.

This concerns a fictitious example: although the working group had recommended that the statue be kept in its painted state for the time being, pending a final intervention, the statue was nevertheless cleaned in September 2021 (although traces of the red colour remain visible especially on the pedestal).

Advantages:

- an apt visualisation of 'protest'
- appropriate for the state of being under question, pending final intervention

Disadvantages:

- the difficulty of clarifying the official nature of this 'confirmed protest'. Who, when and how does one decide and communicate that a context is legitimate?
- the difficulty of officially accepting forms of '~~vandalism~~', while it remains prohibited in other places (cf. *Chapter 6*).
- Risks related to material preservation of the monument, which may limit future, more permanent, intervention scenarios
- hardly any complex narrative is conveyed

0.2: Apply critical interpretation with text and images

The colonial representation of a monument or a street name will be retained for the time being, but will be critically signified by the addition of an information medium such as a sign with text, image, QR code, or other information on it.

The Working Group considers this a weak intervention strategy, appropriate for temporary solutions, but which in many cases will not suffice for more permanent interventions to decolonise public space. For less problematic monumental representations, however, it could be applied within a palette of strategies applied in the city, in addition to more radical ones. This informative interpretation can also be combined with a more pronounced strategy (cf. *I, II, III*).

The critical interpretation will typically consist of a combination of the following elements:

- Historical positioning of the colonial memorial in colonial propaganda culture: context of the memorial initiative, on the proposed topic as cliché, etc.
- Historical facts and more critical or complex narratives regarding the proposed colonial history, which frame and question the mythologisation, glorification or one-sided historical perspective from current knowledge and insights.
- Critical evaluation of representation within the contemporary social context. For example, condemnation of a stereotypical black and white hierarchy, or reference to the meaning of the intentional colonial memorial for different social groups, or within evolving memorial practices.

Examples: The FARO heritage app is an interesting example.[13]

Advantages:

- local intervention refers to, and demonstrates, the overall critical processing of colonial memory culture. Knowledge and arguments about why the existing presentation is problematic are provided.
- This explanatory approach fits in well, and is mutually reinforcing, with a possible exhibition, publication, and debate programme by the documentation centre or museum on the colonial history and memory of Brussels (cf. *§5.2.1.a.*)
- The interpretive information feeds the development of possible new narratives, which gain expression with a more permanent intervention.
- the symbols, meanwhile, as parts of the (historical) colonial memory culture (as documents), remain preserved in their urban coherence.

Disadvantages:

- Who notices the panels or other information carriers, who reads them?
- With respect to monuments, the addition of historical knowledge and interpretation - in the form of a panel with text and/or historical images - can rarely outweigh the monumental power of the existing memorial if it is not combined with stronger visible interventions. The dominance of the original narrative is thus maintained.
- A text panel near an object does not correspond to the naturally rapid observation and movement in the city.
- Often, interpretive texts are too heavily coloured and watered down by political compromise, so they contribute little to critical problematisation. This should be avoided.
- The critical shift towards the colonial memory regime is not clearly shown, if mainly mere contextualisation is applied.

[13] https://apppatrimoine.be/

0.3: Develop other commemorative practices around it

Also, by building new commemorative practices (events, rituals, stories, audiences) around existing colonial symbols and traces, critical distance can be created from the original colonial narrative. New layers of meaning, absent themes, and social connection can be introduced. This process can also be described as a 'reuse' or critical appropriation of the historical traces and symbols from the present and from other 'memory groups'.

The Working Group sees this as an interesting intervention strategy for temporary interventions in anticipation of more permanent scenarios. As a strategy for more permanent interventions, the working group finds them vulnerable. In many cases, this will not suffice for decolonising public space, but it can be part of the palette of strategies applied to places where there are occasions for new memorial practices. This strategy also becomes stronger when it is accompanied, for example, by a certain plastic transformation of the colonial memorial that also marks the new commemorative practice.

In doing so, it is necessary to consider:

- Who develops and organises the activity?
- Do those critical commemorative practices/debates need temporary architectural support? (For example, a scaffolding, kiosk, poster column, project screen, speakers stage and grandstand?)
- Should programming be established with partners? (Civil society, research institution, school, etc.?)

Examples:

- On Square François Riga in Schaerbeek-Helmet, a 1970 monument commemorates all the Belgian wars in Africa; blue stone columns surrounding the monument list the names of important battles (cf. *§4.3.1.7.*). It is a Belgian patriotic monument, commemorating not only the capture of Tabora (now in central Tanzania) from the Germans in 1916, but also the so-called anti-Arab war (column for Kasongo (1892) against the Arabo-Swahili) and even anti-Congolese violence (Lindi (1897) against the rebellious Batetela at the Nile Expedition). At the same time, the monument shows the juxtaposition of a white officer and a black soldier, with two brass intertwined hands in between. At this monument, Belgian Congolese have been commemorating the Unknown Congolese Soldier on 11 November since 2008. On the one hand, it should be noted that Congolese contributions in World Wars I and II are not recognised in the Tomb for the Unknown Soldier at the Congress Column, where Belgium's official November 11 commemoration takes place and, on the other hand, that Congolese soldiers who fought during the World Wars were also not buried in soldiers' cemeteries.
- The recurring guided visits focusing on colonial heritage that the association *Bakushinta* has been organising for years in Brussels, also in collaboration with Lucas Catherine.

Advantages:

- Connects with the logic of monuments in public space as sites of ceremonial remembrance and protest. At certain moments the monuments are prominent, at others they become backdrops to urban life.
- Invites continued updating of critical reflection.
- Allows for different memory groups, and simultaneity of official and unofficial commemorative events

Disadvantages:

- Around each of the large number of colonial memorials, it is impossible to establish an alternative commemorative practice.
- If not combined with other strategies, then on days without a commemorative event, it is unclear that an official review has occurred.
- The critical shift towards the colonial memory regime is not clearly shown, if mainly mere contextualisation is applied.

Specific variant of temporary other commemorative practices:

Programming of temporary installations/performances/events that interrogate the meaning and monumentality of the monument today, or propose an alternative future

Although they are not 'repetitive' and usually do not include a commemorative moment, performative actions around monuments can also be counted (in an extended sense) as a variant of the strategy of inclusion in another commemorative practice. This can also be understood as a temporary variant of *Strategy III, 'Contextualising through Visual Interventions'*.

The working group sees this as an important mobilising strategy within the searching process that decolonising public space also requires.

Advantages:

- the strength of such temporary interventions is their mobilising nature.
- decolonisation is understood not as an end point, but as a process.
- the succession of temporary projects leaves more room for friction, varying sensitivities, meaning-making and political stances.
- different narratives, and different aesthetics of transformation, can be publicly tested and evaluated

Disadvantages:

- programming, i.e. relying on temporary artistic programming, must not become a non-committal alternative to official positioning and change
- if not combined with other strategies, then on days without a commemorative event, it is unclear that an official review has occurred.

Example: performative proposals for equestrian statue Leopold II

Numerous artistic and activist actions have been set up in recent years, around the equestrian statue of Leopold II, problematising the statue and mobilising around a speculative future proposal for the statue. These events occurred in the immediate vicinity of the statue, or from other locations, sometimes using replicas.
Some examples are the performative installation/sculptural performance *PeoPL* by Laura Nsengiyumva during *Nuit Blanche* (2018), in which a replica of the equestrian statue executed in ice slowly melted away, under its inverted pedestal; or more recently, the performative consultation on the preservation or 'fading' of the name Boulevard Leopold II (September 2021), in which Roel Kerkhofs and Sam Vanoverschelde rolled a wooden silhouette of the equestrian statue on wheels through the streets.

Example: Fourth Plinth Project/Fourth Plinth Commission in Trafalgar Square, London

On an empty plinth, successive, long-term, but temporary contemporary artworks have been displayed since 1999. A committee commissions selected artists. It is first and foremost an 'art in public space' project, not an initiative set up for decolonising public space. Separate from the *Fourth Plinth*, other action is also being taken in London for decolonising this square.

Trafalgar Square in central London is a monumental public square, created in the first half of the nineteenth century in the foreground of the *National Gallery.* The square represents Britain's imperial past: by its name, which refers to the *Battle of Trafalgar*, by the monuments in the square - *Nelson's Column* honouring Admiral Nelson, but also an equestrian statue of George IV and statues of Henry Havelock and Charles James Napier, two military men commemorated, among other things, for their military victories in the Indies - and by the presence of *Canada House* and *South Africa House*.

Some of the artworks on display do problematise aspects of this monumental site full of references to *the Empire*. For example, the torso *Alison Lapper Pregnant*, a portrait of the artist Alison Lapper who was born without arms and legs (2005-2007, by artist Marc Quin) challenged virile monumentality. In 2010, Yinka Shonibare installed the work *Nelson's Ship in a Bottle*: the sails of Nelson's ship were made of printed textiles associated with West African and African-European identities. In the autumn of 2022, Samson Kabalu will install a sculpture that re-enacts a 1914 photograph: a picture of Baptist preacher and pan-Africanist John Chilembwe next to European missionary John Chorly. Chilembwe wears a hat: '*there's subversion there, because at that time in 1914 it was forbidden for Africans to wear hats before white people*'[14] Kabalu says of it.

[14] https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-57699300 BBC.com, July 5, 2021, last accessed October 24, 2021.

Example: Ibrahim Mahama, *Dokpeda 2012-2021*, at exhibition Congoville (2021):

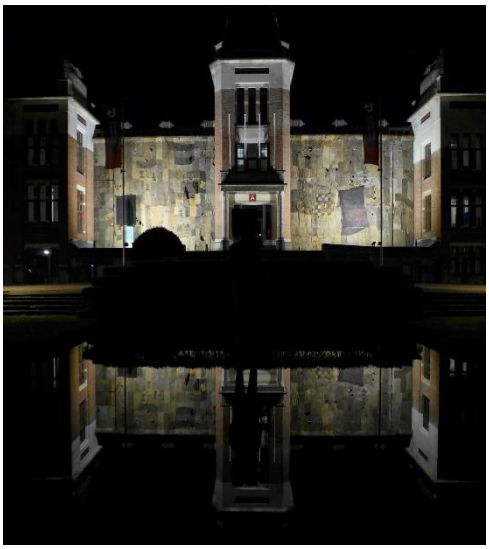

FIG. 28. Ibrahim Mahama, *Dokpeda*, 2012-2021. (Photo: Ibrahim Mahama)

example of how focused architectural gestures, in this case in the form of a temporary art intervention, can critically comment on, and counterbalance, the monumentality of a colonial institutional building. This is also a temporary variant of *Strategy III, 'Contextualising through Visual Interventions'*.

The Ghanaian artist Mahama temporarily covered two façades on either side of the central entrance portico of the former Colonial University in Antwerp (now, among other things, the rectorate building of the University of Antwerp) with burlap sacks: they break the stately, stone monumentality, visualise transcontinental trade in raw materials, and draw attention to the colonial history of this educational building.

B. FINALITIES:

Three strategies for interventions of a more permanent nature

These three strategies embrace the idea of a transformation of intentional memorials as memory media for contemporary and future society: they combine *preservation* of attention and presence of memory in places in public space with the *development* of new historical narratives and social connections to these memory sites and objects.

I. Removal from (this) public space and replacement

A memorial (intentional commemorative monument) that is no longer wanted in public space can be removed from it. It is a gesture and practical intervention that is an inseparable part of the modern culture of monuments, which is after all as much marked by cultural processes of change as of preservation (Otero-Pailos and Widrich 2018).[15]

The Working Group considers this a core strategy in decolonising public space. It should (like *Strategy II*) be applied in a targeted way to the most problematic memorials, and on the basis of the new narratives and representations to be

[15] 'The geographical stability and permanence of monuments has been both a paradigm and a myth, particularly when it comes to monuments constructed for commemorative purposes, but also for buildings or sites turned into monuments by cultural definition and the fluctuation of political regimes.'

developed. It must also be applied proportionately to preserve a historically stratified urban landscape.

The combination of removal with replacement guarantees that the remembrance of historical realities does not disappear, but takes on a new meaning that allows for historical, social and cultural actualisation.

a) About the removal

Processing four aspects is then of great importance in order to give precise meaning to that omission as well.

1. Explicitly discuss the *motivation* for the removal publicly.
2. The material and ceremonial *process* of dismantling, overthrowing, removal: the gesture and the process of removal have meaning and should not be considered only as a technical act. They can be played out with, for example, a ceremony, participatory project, photographic documentation, etc.
3. The possible *visibility of the absence of a* removed monument (before, at, or after the replacement): e.g. with an empty pedestal and an information sign setting out the removal and discussing whether there will be a redesign of the public space in question (*Strategy VI*), a replacement (*Strategy IV*), or announcing a '*Decolonial Work in Progress*.'
4. The preservation - or not - of the removed memorial object, and its *relocation* to a new place and context of meaning: depending on how this is handled, other stories can be developed (see box below).

Examples: In Bristol (UK) on June 7, 2020, a bronze statue (from 1895) of local 18th century slave trader Edward Colston was toppled and thrown into the (Upper) Avon River. The city, meanwhile, fished the sculpture out of the harbour and is considering what to do with the object.

The Royal Museum of Central Africa removed a bust of Leopold II from its symbolic place of honour in the museum's courtyard when it reopened in 2018. Other objectionable images were also moved or marked and masked (cf. *supra*).

At the same time, the ivory bust of Leopold II - placed centrally on the Congo Star in the main rotunda in 1910 - was displayed in a vitrine to problematise colonial extraction under Leopold II's reign. Opinions differ as to whether this contextualisation of the image was successful or not.

In November 2020, the city of Leuven removed the statue of Leopold II from its niche in the Gothic town hall, leaving the niche empty.

<u>Advantages</u>:

- removal is a strong social gesture, statement and the replacement reinforces this.
- removal allows relocation to a new context with often more possibilities for complex problematisation of the removed monument, in a narrative together with other monuments or pieces. Thus, the sculpture does not disappear from the public space but shows that it has been given a different place and a different status.

Points of interest and disadvantages:

avoid the disadvantage of so-called amnesia: when it comes to unique memorial traces of problematic persons and events of colonial history, their removal from public space could encourage the concealment of those troublesome histories, and obscure their interrelation with the local place where the monument was erected. But this disadvantage disappears if by other - and better - means an updated local memory about this colonial past is provided. This can be realised in several ways.

What to do with removed monuments?

On the one hand, the Working Group believes that bringing together a sufficiently large and diverse collection of removed intentional colonial commemorative monuments creates an important opportunity to take a good look at the propagandistic monumental culture of Belgian colonialism, and its myths and clichés, and to discuss it in its breadth and complexity. If all of the removed statues or place name signs are scattered among various depots or museums, this strategic opportunity is lost.

On the other hand, the Working Group also finds it important that different municipalities, or institutions, remain involved and retain 'ownership' of their 'dark heritage', and that this should not be completely outsourced to central, specialised agencies. Therefore, the Working Group argues for the preservation of sufficient 'difficult objects' locally and in a multitude of institutions, places, initiatives spread throughout the region.

Finally, the Working Group finds that in exceptional cases, the destruction of selected symbols is an option to be considered, as part of a careful process, with care for historical documentation, provided there is sufficient support in society, and in the perspective of the entire territory of the Brussels-Capital Region.

Destroy or reuse?

Destroying heritage found to be problematic has a long tradition, but is typically condemned as ideological vandalism within the heritage community. Modern heritage care also tries to preserve socially condemned heritage objects in their material integrity because of their historical documentary or artistic value, for example. But it is precisely the standard protection and preservation regimes of heritage care that sometimes stand in the way of decolonising public space, and contribute to the persistence of the colonial memory device.

The Working Group considers the material destruction of removed statues (e.g. by melting them down) a valid option if applied proportionately (cf. *Strategy II*): it possesses great symbolic meaning, but also clashes with the desire to preserve and problematise historical evidence of the regime of colonial representation. The Working Group, therefore, argues that the material destruction of statues, pedestals, inscriptions, etc., can be done by exception, if there is support in society and provided the objects are fully documented, or other versions of the same object exist. It is important not to destroy objects whose documentary and artistic contribution, aesthetics, etc. are not present or addressed elsewhere.

Set up in a different, less prominent, public space?

The importance of a monument is related to the importance of the public space it occupies, and the way it does so. So, in principle, there is an option to 'downgrade'

colonial monuments by moving them to a less prominent place, elsewhere in public space. On the whole, this does run the risk of being very half-hearted, but can be meaningful in specific cases.

Store, possibly exhibit, in what kind of place?

Removed statues can be kept individually or together with other colonial monuments in:

- *a new or existing heritage repository*: here they remain available for research and for loan to temporary exhibitions (in which case there is no need to bring together the removed colonial sculptures in one place; a sculpture from a particular municipality can be kept in the heritage repository of that municipality along with other artefacts of material culture). It could also possibly be an accessible (themed) depository / open storage.
- exhibited in *permanent museum displays* - this has the advantage of developing contextualising and critical interpretations and seizing the added value of bringing the objects together.
- exhibited in *temporary museum presentations* - this has the same advantage, but in addition allows the objects to be more dynamically highlighted, to address different (de)colonial historical and current themes.
- exhibited in a *thematic sculpture park* - set up not as works of art or as monuments, but as removed and problematised objects. This has the advantage of making the removal from public spaces more of a critical displacement, and allows the *staging* of this new gathering place to introduce a *new symbolic aesthetic* – e.g. a lapidarium, cemetery, research laboratory, 'dump' – (cf. *infra*).

And if to a museum, to what kind of museum? Treat objects as works of art, as historical material culture, or using an interdisciplinary approach? Decolonial credibility of destination institution? Link with heritage communities?

Transferring images to existing or new museums for preservation, research, and exhibition often also means *choosing between specific disciplinary narratives* that the various museums can develop around the object from their expertise:

Examples:

- The street sign from *Cassland Road Gardens* (named after Sir John Cass, director of the *Royal African Company* who amassed wealth from the transatlantic slave trade in the 16th and 17th centuries) in the London borough of Hackney, was transferred to the local *Hackney Museum* in December 2020 after a decision was made to change the street name.
- Dupagne's sculpture of the archer (cf. *§4.4.2.*) could be highlighted at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium from an art historical narrative, and possibly also include the colonial past and the representation of black people as themes;
- if transferred to the Royal Museum for Central Africa or the Royal Institute of Natural Sciences, Storms' bust would provide an occasion to discuss the collection history of these museums.
- In a thematic museum/sculpture park about colonial monuments and about Brussels as a colonial city, the statues and other symbols are not reduced to works of art (unlike when moved to an art museum).

In choosing this transfer, it is also important to be able to trust that the receiving museum will also establish a credible *decolonial project* within its own institution.

The way in which institutions engage with local or national heritage groups may also factor into the consideration.

<u>The importance of the aesthetics of the arrangement and the environment for removed pieces: on sculpture parks, depots, cemeteries for statues, etc. ...</u>

When removed statues, nameplates and other colonial memorials are gathered at a collection site, after they have been removed from their pedestals and squares from the city, the method of preservation, arrangement, exhibition is very important.

FIG. 29. *Collectif Faire-part*, *Echangeur*, 2016 (film). The collective Fair-Part goes in search of traces of colonial monuments in Kinshasa that were moved to the *Musée National Ethnographique*.

It must be clear at all times that **these statues are maintained as 'relics'** of the colonial city, but that **they are not set up again as monuments**. The fact that they are placed close together is important in this regard. Also, for example, they do not stand (high) on pedestals, nor do they dominate their surrounding space. They are also labelled rather than being combined with title inscriptions.

This aesthetic can vary between:

- Sculpture park - objects become decorative elements of a park layout: to be avoided.
- (Outdoor) museum - objects are exhibited within a museum approach that actively reframes the objects in terms of history and iconography
- (Outdoor) depot - storage with aesthetics that evoke storage (pallets, transportation, etc.), monuments in motion, storage that can be temporary or permanent;
- Lapidarium - aesthetic of ruinous nature, fragments, nature taking over culture, ...
- Cemetery - aesthetics of farewell, closed life of these monuments; however, very delicate: meanings are difficult to control among/between very diverse monuments; we associate cemeteries with commemoration of the dead and this creates the risk of the colonial cemetery becoming a pro-colonial memorial: to be avoided.
- Research Laboratory (made publicly accessible) – aesthetics of critical research, from contemporary society.

Examples:

- *Szobor Park (Memento Park/Memorial park) on the* outskirts of Budapest, Hungary: collects monumental statues and plaques of Lenin, Marx, Engels, Hungarian communist leaders and other statues from the communist regime. The use of banal brick and concrete for the pedestals, along with the park setting, works against the monumental impact of the sculptures here.
- An artwork with cemetery aesthetics: The artwork *Cemetery of Architects* by Tayfun Serttas, exhibited in Istanbul in 2014.

- Uninstalled plaster models in Rodin's studio in Meudon (France): arranged on a large palette
- The sculpture-viewing depot of Middelheim Museum Antwerp
- Asli Çiçek's design for the open-air depot of Middelheim Museum Antwerp

FIG. 30. open-air depot of Middelheim Museum Antwerp (Collection Kunst in de Stad), new installation from 2021. (Project and photo : Asli Çiçek.)

b) About replacing memorials

A problematic representation can be replaced by a new, desired representation. In the process, a charged contrast and a narrative typically emerge in the equation. After all, the new show may present the same subject differently, or it may present a different subject. The difference with *Strategy III 'Contextualisation through visual interventions'* is that the original monument is not preserved in situ.

Example:

In Mexico City, the city council decided in October 2021 that the already removed statue of Columbus that overlooked the city's central boulevard would be replaced by an enlarged replica of the 'pre-Columbian' statue *Young Woman of Amajac*, possibly a fertility goddess from the Huaxtec culture.[16]

[16]Lode Delputte, 'Columbus moet wijken voor inheemse vrouw [Columbus must give way to indigenous woman]', in *De Standaard*, 19 October 2021. https://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20211018_97628490

Advantages:

- the replacement can also encompass a narrative of problematisation and change
- replacement immediately allows for untold stories, voices, and more diverse representation to be brought into public space

Points of interest and disadvantages:

- Only if the new representation is also related to colonial history and colonial and postcolonial immigration does an unintentional 'amnesia' not arise
- new representations should not only be put in place to replace problematic ones, but are better added also on new occasions, in the pursued decolonial public space as an inclusive public space.

Specific variant: the modification of place names

A clarifying sign with the name change may preserve the trace of the former colonial place names and also indicate the considerations for the change. Both after the First and Second World Wars, street names were changed (e.g. the former Duitslandstraat in Anderlecht, the former Avenue Maréchal Pétain in Ixelles).

Examples:

- The name change from Leopold II tunnel to Anny Cordy tunnel in Brussels. It is a substitution that increases diversity within representation through place names but has no connection to the colonial past and decolonisation. As such, this name changed a colonial trace without remembering colonial history and its consequences.
- In numerous British cities, street names are being changed; in greater London for example the focus is on Havelock Road (part of it is already being renamed Guru Nanak Road).[17]
- The London City Council, led by Mayor Sadiq Khan, announced in October 2021 that a £1 million fund would be released to kick-start change in the representation of '*Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, women, LGBTQ+ communities and disabled people*' in public spaces.[18] Among other things, grants (of £25,000) will be made available to community organisations that want to remove and replace street names, building names and memorials that refer to persons responsible for slavery and other forms of oppression and colonialism. To do so, organisations must apply for one of the *Untold Stories* grants.

Because changing official place names also requires a great deal of administrative effort and cost, not only from authorities but also from residents and users of streets, addresses, etc., any name change must be justified and considered in the perspective of representation at the level of the entire territory of the Brussels-Capital Region.

[17]Others include Black Boy Lane (changed to La Rose Lane) and Cassland Road Gardens (new name not decided yet).

[18]*Mayor's Diversity Commission to Celebrate London's Untold Stories, 21 October 2021,* https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayors-commission-to-celebrate-londons-stories accessed 22.01.2022.

We also propose that the address holders be reimbursed for their costs in the event of a name change so that practical inconveniences do not become obstacles that would prevent the name change.

II. Reusing materials for a new representation

Material dismantling and reuse/recycling of the materials originally used create a form of critical continuity. When the materials of statues and other memorials have colonial origins (copper, tin, …), and stem from colonial exploitation, highlighting this materiality and its historical production become meaningful themes. This materiality can bring up and symbolise the economic, technological and demographic aspects of colonial exploitation, modernity, (forced) labour, violence. The Working Group considers remelting and other forms of material reuse to be a strong gesture, which may be appropriate as an intervention in highly contested monumental representations. Melting was previously employed by artivist Laura Nsengiyumva in her installation/performance *Peopl* (2018) (cf. *infra*). As Joachim Ben Yakoub (2021: 141) emphasises*, 'For Nsengiyumva, melting an ice replica of this royal and colonial monument, central to the national history of Belgium, hints at the slow, almost invisible but instrumental, disappearance of the phantasmagorical and imposing presence of the late king, along with the colonial epistemologies the statue embodies in public space.'*

Example:

- In 2018, Doris Salcedo created the work *Fragmentos (Fragments)*: a counter-monument in a memorial museum in Bogotà, which is entirely dedicated to this work: the entire floor there is occupied by the melted remains of 37 tons of weapons that FARC handed over to the United Nations in implementation of the peace truce. The peace agreement between the Colombian government and the guerrilla forces had also stipulated that three works of art (in Havana, New York, Bogotá) would commemorate the conflict. The 'melting' here is a gesture that carries the retelling of a collective history. Also, the involvement, in the production of the work, of twenty women who were victims of sexual slavery, invests this work with meaning and connects it to personal, as well as shared, stories.[19]

Advantages:

- Re-melting metals or breaking up and reusing other materials and elements in a different way (stone, letters, etc.) is a symbolically strong gesture of change, that allows to be connected which more complex narratives,
- the originally problematic historical object does not disappear completely, its materiality is preserved, as a reference to another temporary form/message,
- materiality becomes a theme, and in some cases, this is just a direct product of colonial exploitation, so the new story is not only about the old and new representation, but also about the mining and moving of materials in the colonial period and today.

[19] https://plus.lesoir.be/195762/article/2018-12-14/colombie-un-contre-monument-pour-denoncer-la-guerre https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/01/28/inenglish/1548664699_342362.html The website of this 'Espacio de Arte y Memoria', which depends on the Museo Nacional de Colombia: https://www.museonacional.gov.co/micrositios1/Fragmentos/index.html

Points of interest and disadvantages:

- the monumental historical object is lost both as a historical work of art and document.
- in order not to repeat the previous violence in the production of a new representation, should the new representation not also pay tribute to the victims in the mining of this material?

Note:

The modern production process of sculptures and sculptural monuments often entails the production of original models (in plaster, for example) and a production, according to the model, in bronze (sometimes in several casts, copies) or marble of this monumental sculpture. As a result, multiple versions of certain monuments and sculptures are known and preserved. This may increase support for recycling the material from one of them.

III. Contextualising through visual interventions (in terms of urban appearance and the message of the monument).

Through a transformation of the (visual appearance of the) existing monument (its name, location in a public space, possible pedestal and image and text representations) its meaning can be changed, as well as its visual impact on public space.

Architectural, urban-spatial, or visual means may be used for this purpose, which change the meaning or alter the symbolic appearance of the monument on its surroundings.

The Working Group believes this strategy has potential, especially when a memorial can be redesigned in conjunction with its surrounding public space.

The four following, more concrete, approaches are interpretations of this strategy:

- Modify the representation of the monument by replacing, or altering the image.
- Intervene on the pedestal structure of the sculpture to problematise the monument, add layers of meaning.
- Add a 'counter-image' in the vicinity, so that the overall meaning and effect of the monument in its concrete public space changes. (Note: this logic of a 'counter-image' is not the same as that of the 'counter monument' as discussed further below (cf. *§5.3.2.3.II.*), although the latter term is also sometimes used in this sense.)
- Redesign of the public space (square, park, background), which will put the monument in a different context, may make it lose its dominance, and change its importance and/or meaning.

FIG. 31. Freddy Tsimba, *Centres fermés, rêves ouverts*, RMCA Tervuren, 2016. (Photo: Benoit LF.)

Example of interventions on a statue:

- After work on a statue of the Shah of Iran was halted upon the fall of his regime in 1979, the statue's booted legs were placed in front of the Niavaran Palace complex. It is a confrontational image that captures the imagination and thus contributes to the memory of the shah being passed down from generation to generation - and not necessarily in the way the current autocratic regime would like. A similar arrangement of part of a colonial statue can simultaneously show that the person(s) represented is no longer given a place in the public space and keep the memory of him/her alive.

Example of a transformation of the view and message, by adding a new image layer:

- The printed, translucent textile screens placed a short distance in front of the rotunda's niches with sculptures at the Royal Museum for Central Africa, as part of the RE/STORE (2020) project by artists Aimé Mpane and Jean-Pierre Muller. The pro-colonial allegorical images and objectifying depictions of Africans which were problematic for the museum's message today were retained in situ, but their visibility was obstructed and new visual messages were added, in dialogue with the underlying images. They refer to critiques of colonisation, to pervasive coloniality, and to the broad social task of decolonial repair.

Example of interventions on the pedestal structure:

- Paul Ramirez Jonas' sculpture ***The Commons*** made from cork depicts an equestrian statue without a rider and shifted attention from the (absent) rider to the audience who can pin photos, written messages and other memorabilia to the pedestal. Following the example of this artwork, a structure can be created around the empty pedestal of a removed statue on which passers-by can write their comments on the missing statue. Thus, the memory of it can be kept alive, despite its absence. Such an approach simultaneously allows for a permanent trace (through the pedestal) and has temporary aspects (through the public responses that are removed over time to make way for new ones, but not before they have been documented).

Example of transformation of an urban square, and a reduction in the dominance of monuments of an earlier regime:

- **Skanderbeg Square, Tirana** (Albania) as redesigned by Brussels-based designers 51N4E and Plant en Houtgoed (2010-2018): the square is laid out as a very gently sloping pyramid, changing the perspective of the surrounding ex-communist government buildings. Pools of water in the square create a more informal atmosphere, as do the seating and greenery.[20]

Example of an architectural project that, through its place in the city, and its exceptional integrated iconography, changes the meaning of urban monumentality:

[20] Project description on the website of the Mies award, European Union Prize for Architecture: https://miesarch.com/work/4190

- Barak Building,[21] Melbourne (Australia) (ARM): at the end of the *Swanston Street* axis and opposite the *Shrine of Remembrance* (national memorial to Australian servicemen killed during WWI), 3 km further down on the other end of this axis, the *Barak Building* was created in 2015 as a counterpoint to this *Shrine*: a residential building 80m high, displaying across its entire façade a portrait of William Barak (c. 1824-1903), the last traditional *ngurungaeta* (elder) of the Wurundjeri-Willam clan, and an advocate for social justice for '*First Nations*'.

  The project illustrates the symbolic possibilities of urban planning implantation with a mutual dialogue between the monuments and public spaces, their scale, and their image. The fact that this is a private real estate development, and that the building has no other function that makes this gesture more substantial (e.g. museum, memorial and university) is at the same time a weakness.

Different degrees of questioning and meaning-change within this process are possible:

  - from symbolically reducing and counteracting the monumentality (by changing the location, altering the pedestal or public space around it, counteracting the visibility by green planting or overgrowth, etc.),
  - over merely raising critical awareness (e.g. by adding a problematizing content element)
  - up to and including a complete reversal of meaning and its transformation into a 'statue of shame' (e.g. if the bust of Storms daubed with red paint had been retained as such, or replaced with a reference, on the old plinth, to the violence (decapitation) to Chief Lusinga).
- Is it a permanent or temporary intervention?
  - Permanent and materially irreversible interventions: have a very high symbolic content, but go against modern heritage practice
  - Permanent and materially reversible: a technically reversible intervention (that is intended to be permanent) so as not to harm the material document
  - Temporary interventions: can generate event attention, but they can also maintain a hierarchy of permanent colonial symbols over temporary critical interventions....

<u>Advantages</u>:

- The visual 'power' of the monumental performance can be broken, and the critical operation deploys the same visual power.
- Colonial memory does not disappear but is problematised, and enriched
- Contemporary cultural actors and practices come into play, and the decolonial initiative becomes visible as a contemporary social fact in the city.
- In transforming the entire public space, a more inclusive use of public space can also be anticipated.

[21]Project description on the architects' website ARM: https://armarchitecture.com.au/projects/barak-vbuilding/

Disadvantages:

- The success of this operation depends heavily on the quality of the design proposals developed. Intervention on the image itself is usually a very delicate subject - individual projects must be able to persuade.
- To counter the image's monumentality and glorification, the intervention itself must also be sufficiently large, powerful and present - which is not always possible with 'interventions'.
- Interventions on the sculpture itself - regardless of its colonial theme - as a radical and unconventional heritage intervention can also provoke a strong backlash. This may be lessened when the interventions involve the pedestal or public space.

Specific variant: Thematic repurposing of a colonial site or monumental building

The thematic repurposing of a site or building with colonial history - which may include colonial representations such as integrated sculptures - into a critical memory site can be considered a variant of *Strategy III 'Contextualising through Visual Interventions*', if the repurposing is also accompanied by visible architectural, artistic, or museographic gestures. However, thematic repurposing also has important aspects in common with *Strategy 0.3 'Developing other commemorative practices around it,* because a new use, which establishes a substantive relationship with the heritage, is central.

The term 'thematic' reuse means that the new use of the building entirely or partly refers to the memory or problematisation of the specific history of this place or of colonialism in general, for example through reuse as a museum, research centre, public forum, etc. Then the whole site could be 'curated' and the best possible distribution of exhibiting the building and new activities should be considered.

This can be a very powerful strategy for important colonial *lieux de mémoire*, but cannot be applied to every property or site.

However, not all buildings and urban sites with colonial history can, nor should they, be 'thematically' re-purposed. Buildings, specifically, can encompass other functions and meanings in their life cycle that often intersect different social regimes. Sometimes thematic repurposing can also take up a secundary function of the building or site, for example, when one space in a building is reserved for a display case or film that interprets and problematises the history of the place.

Example:

The *Palais de la Porte Dorée* in Paris, an art deco building with frescoes and bas-reliefs in the exterior and interior originally built as a French colonial museum on the occasion of the 1931 International Colonial Exhibition, was chosen in 2007 as the site for a new museum institution: the *Musée national de l'histoire de l'immigration*.

In 2012 and 2013, in addition to the exhibition on the history of migration, a '*parcours d'interprétation de l'histoire du Palais de la Porte Dorée*' was developed, which allows the monument to be understood as a testimony to both art deco and the history of colonialism and immigration in France. That trail adds text panels, models and interactive screens in some locations, while other rooms offer genuine museum exhibits on the

building's history and connected themes. At the same time, the permanent exhibition at the museum was often criticised for not highlighting the relationship between colonial history and immigration (the permanent display is currently being redeveloped).[22]

The 'anachronistic' and pictorial framework of the 'building and its representations' (architecture, integrated symbols, sculptures, murals, inscriptions, use of materials) can be both an interesting reason and a difficulty for the new decolonial use (e.g. museum or discussion place), but it can never be ignored. Dealing with architectural monumentality (monumental character, urban implantation) is also a challenge: (cf. *supra* and the example of Dokpeda already cited under *Strategy 03* at *§5.3.1*)

5.3.2. New monuments and symbolic urban spaces (as replacement of or in addition to existing ones)

Creating new monuments and symbolic (commemorative) inscriptions that mark the city and its public spaces constitutes a second strand of 'sub-strategies' for decolonising public space. They allow for today's absent but desirable representations of what can connect current and future society, and for the creation of other (historical) narratives (both related to the colonial past and to the diverse society today), with a view to imagining and realising a more inclusive public space (including public institutions). Needless to say, this does not depend solely on the revision of existing markers and the addition of new symbolic markers. It includes the design of the urban public spaces themselves, and in their use/management as inclusive urban spaces - from the plazas at federal institutions to outdoor public swimming pools.

However, for many reasons, erecting new monuments is much less common today than it was in the 19th and first half of the 20th century. It is therefore not an obvious task (cf. *supra*).

Yet, it remains important for today's society and for decolonial inclusion to seize the possibility of permanent 'public speaking' by occupying public space through a 'monument' with presence and meaning, and by giving this representation – of a person, event, idea – an aura of importance and permanence.

After all, realising the new contents and narratives for decolonising public space only through temporary interventions and programming of art, without making permanent markers, would maintain an undesirable hierarchy, not only between the permanence of colonial memory culture and decolonial resistance, but also between the permanent and temporarily represented individuals, groups, and ideas. In doing so, it is important not to merely intervene and 'correct' with monuments; it is best to also invest in the creation of new public places, projects for monuments, art integrations, and so on.

The development of new monuments and symbolic urban spaces is only in part *retrospective,* aimed at the actualisation of the stories we want and need to tell today as a society about the (post)colonial past. It should also be *future-oriented*: creating new representations of an inclusive (urban) society, nurturing other legacies, experiences, contributions, experiences of identity, through which society can be shaped today and

[22] https://www.palais-portedoree.fr/fr/le-palais-de-la-porte-doree

tomorrow – that is creating (intentional) monuments as '*engagements in ongoing acts of becoming, fabulation, and invoking communities to come*' (Vinegor *et.al.* 2011: iii). Thus, the creation of new urban monuments cannot be an end point of a decolonisation process, but must be part of an ongoing process, in which decolonising public space is not an end in itself, but one of the means in a broader social transformation.

5.3.2.1 Avoiding further repetition of reductive representations

Issue 1: the 'pantheon' of historical heroes: not to be shut down, but revised and expanded

Honouring individuals as commemorated 'hero(in)(es)' in the proverbial national open-air pantheon of public space - even if it is to make this garland of honorees more diverse with decolonial or inclusive intentions - is anything but self-evident today. Remembering history as a sum of deserving individuals has long been problematised. The whole logic of a monumental cult of persons seems to be long out of date and is also fundamentally questioned by exposing the white, male, heterosexual and other hegemonies in this symbolic gallery of honour. This also ties in with the decolonial critique that monuments are intrinsically part of a colonial discursive infrastructure - which raises the question of whether, and how, they can also be used today in a decolonial sense.

But paradoxically, from the criticism of the under-representation of minorities, there also comes a demand for more representations of individuals; the outdated system of person monuments also seems to be revived by both criticism and renewed expectations and demands.

The challenge seems to have become not to simply dismiss the urban pantheon of persons as innocent and outdated, nor to abolish it altogether, but rather to revise it thoroughly in an ongoing process of upheaval: through omissions, substitutions and additions, but also by reinventing the logic of the system. The traditional iconography of triumph at memorials, e.g. equestrian statues, leaders, triumphal arches, cannot be continued. These processes can never be without tensions and politicisation, but also require creativity. They are both political and cultural contemporary challenges.

Issue 2: Avoid stereotyping also with new content and representations

Obviously it is not simply a matter of more monumental markers honouring unrepresented historical individuals from the former Belgian Africa, or Belgians of Sub-Saharan background. The selection of persons and stories, the textual naming, and the visual representations must also avoid and break stereotypes of black persons.

Situations such as the following one should be avoided: in Kortrijk, in 2020, a statue 'Karaboeja' was placed (temporarily), which would have commemorated Congolese carabouya sellers by a naked figure.

It is therefore important when commissioning, guiding, and/or developing new memorials honouring black people, to involve individuals who have an eye for this from their expertise or experience of identity.

This does not mean that stereotypes cannot be consciously critically brought up in new works of art or monuments - usually on the condition, however, that this is also done by artists/writers/curators from the position of black person, or person of African descent.

5.3.2.2 What new content should these monuments represent?

a) The absent themes and narratives related to colonial history (cf. the listing under *§5.2.1.3.*)
b) **Persons from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi throughout Belgian history** (pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial), also focusing on women and LGBTQAI+ persons, and by extension other persons from Sub-Saharan Africa who have a link to Belgian history. In doing so, it is also important to avoid representing individuals primarily as victims and witnesses, as this preserves the colonial model. Rather than presenting colonial subjects as grateful, passive recipients of the generosity of colonisers, neither may they now be presented as their passive, unhappy victims, again emphasising in the first instance the agency of the colonisers. A decolonial perspective does not forget the memory of victims, but also emphasises the agency of former colonial subjects and their descendants, with particular attention to their cultural, social, political, or other merits, as well as the artistic creativity of artists from the former Belgian colony and mandate territories (cf. *§5.3.3.1, Strategy IV*).
c) Social values and cherished ideas such as (urban) diversity, inclusiveness, decoloniality, anti-racism, democracy, human rights, full citizenship, ...
d) Representations of the decolonisation process itself: imagining a space for criticism, debate, social processing of Belgium's colonial past. How can the debate on society's dealings with the colonial past and its after-effects find a place in the public sphere?

5.3.2.3. What (new) carriers for new content in the city?

<u>I. New place names (for existing or new streets and squares, parks, infrastructure) and names for buildings and institutions (community centres, libraries, etc.)</u>

With the naming of streets, squares, parks, and infrastructure, it is easier to convincingly add new representations of commemorated *persons* in public space (without iconographic monumentality), than with new statues or person's memorials.

New names can not only replace place names deemed problematic (referring to colonial figures), but also new urban spaces, and infrastructure such as bridges or quays, can bear these new names. (That's easier to accomplish than name changes.)

Finally, (government) buildings and institutions (e.g. community centres and libraries) can also be named after Belgian/Brussels African persons or the other contents listed under *§5.3.2.2.*

A historical-geographical link of the new name with the urban location is not a prerequisite - the fact that a municipality or other government chooses the name already creates a local link - but can provide added value to mark the historical reality of Brussels as a colonial and postcolonial city, also through naming.

<u>II. New (counter) monuments: from contemporary art to landscape design</u>

We can distinguish between different types of monuments according to the type of content and the way in which the content will be presented:

a) Monuments (in a narrower sense)

- They make a lasting evocation or representation of something that society finds memorable, and around which it wishes to establish a memory in the present and the future: monuments *honour* people, events, ideas. There are traditional monument types - architectural monuments such as obelisks, statues, and busts on pedestals, or more complex combinations of architecture, sculpture, and inscriptions - and typical formal languages, scales and sizes, and materials that give the monuments 'monumentality'. The representation (image) usually interprets and symbolises what is to be remembered, while a text caption identifies the remembered and often also articulates its importance or merit. The founding moment, and who instituted the commemoration, is also often mentioned.

  Example:

  Monument to human rights *Urbi et Orbi*, Tour and Taxis, Brussels, 2018, designed by Bureau Bas Smets. Uses the archetype of the stone obelisk (placed in a circle surrounded by coniferous trees), stacking natural stone of different colours, on which the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are engraved in four languages.

- However, an integral application of the classical monument formulas is today rarely culturally credible, especially as far as individuals are concerned. Figurative sculpture is no longer the liveliest form of representation it was for a long time. More recently, the inauguration of such statues sparked controversy in London (the statues of Mary Wollstonecraft and Princess Diana) and in Sapri, Italy (*La Spigolatrice*, a fictional, female figure from a poem by Luigi Mercantini). Moreover, recognising the heterogeneity of a super-diverse society means that it is not so easy to find consensus on (local or national) heroes. German art historian and curator Kasper König formulated it with a witticism: a snowman, in his opinion, is the perfect sculpture for public space - he is not in the way, everyone knows him and once he melts he is gone (cited in Waldvogel 2008: 79).

The challenge, therefore, is to create new types of monuments.

- Often, several classical 'parameters' usually have to be thoroughly revised in order to establish monuments in a credible way, for example with a post-minimal aesthetic, through a processing of traces and 'archive' (in a broad sense), or through the connection of the creation process with symbolic participation, forms of temporality, etc.

  Example: Marc Quinn and Jen Reid, *A Surge of Power (Jen Reid)*, Bristol, 2020.

  It is an example of an exceptionally direct application, or appropriation, of the classical monumental imagery of statues: a statue in black resin (non-permanent

material), depicts an action by BLM demonstrator Jen Reid who, after the statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol was toppled, briefly climbed the pedestal and made a Black Power fist gesture. Quinn contacted Reid based on an Instagram photo of her at the protests. The statue was placed there temporarily without official permission.[23]

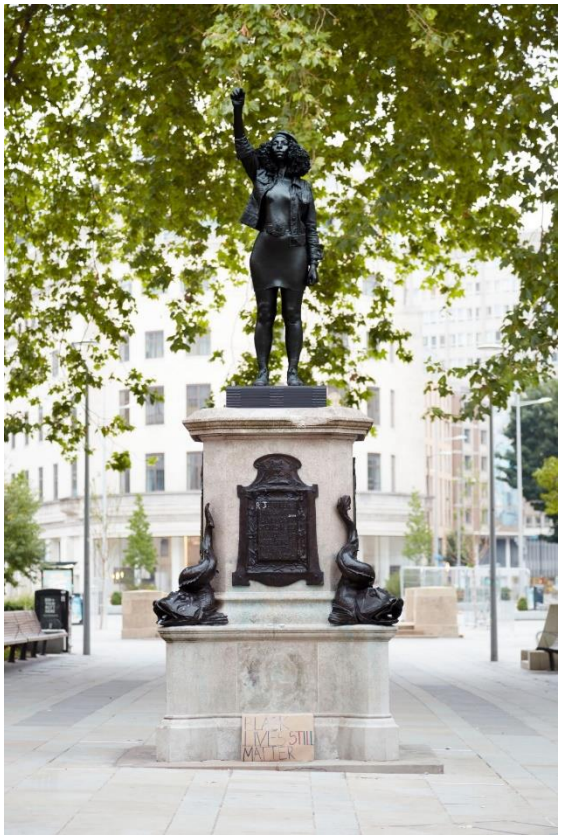

FIG. 32. Marc Quinn and Jen Reid, *A Surge of Power* (Jen Reid) 2020 http://marcquinn.com/

- Monuments - like counter-monuments and memorials, for that matter - remain the subject of an oft-repeated double-death critique: that they always threaten to seal off, fossilise and bury memory rather than keep it socially alive and open up space for questioning; and that, as a static presence in the modern, changing city, they always at a given monument become background to everyday life, and are approached with indifference rather than evoke attention, awe or reflection. We need to embrace these fundamental critiques, i.e. the problem of the modern monument, as *disclaimers*, recognising that monuments (in a broad sense) themselves will never be the solution, acknowledging their 'weaknesses', but at the same time recognising their importance at a time when presumed indifference is giving way to focused social mobilisation around intentional monuments that are resurrected (in protest)...

b) Memorials / *Mahnmale*

New glorifying monuments (in German, '*Denkmale*') have rarely been erected in recent decades (in Western Europe at least). Rather, from the 1980s and into the 2000s, we saw an investment in '*Mahnmale*': monuments to a difficult past that should not be forgotten, memorials to social traumas and the recognition of wrongs (e.g. the Holocaust monuments in Germany, and in other European [capital] cities).

They take the form of architectural or landscape monuments, whether or not they are located on historically significant sites or on sites that lend themselves well to the desired mood as a setting. When victims are commemorated, a multitude of remembered persons is often evoked by numbers, lists of names, etc.

- Monument to the murdered Jews of Europe (*Denkmal fur die ermordeten Juden Europas*), Berlin, inaugurated in 2005, designed by Peter Eisenman: a landscaped grid of more than 2,000 concrete blocks that hints at a cemetery.

[23] See 'A Joint Statement from Marc Quinn and Jen Reid', July 15, 2020, http://marcquinn.com/studio/news/a-joint-statement-from-marc-quinn-and-jen-reid (last consulted December 2, 2021)

- *Brussels Memorial 22/03*, Sonian Forest (2017), designed by Bureau Bas Smets. A quiet place in the forest: a low circular ring forms a serene bench, and a circle of 32 birches around it refers to the 32 victims of the March 22, 2016 attacks.

FIG. 33. Casa della Memoria, Milan (Baukuh, 2015), the mural made of variously coloured stone bricks covers four facades and consists of reproductions of archival photos. (www.casadellamemoria.it/)

Memorials often operate in combination with documentation centres or memorial museums. This has the advantage that places of symbolic commemoration can be combined with places of research, (evidence) documentation, and evolving knowledge reflection, allowing for a less static and more complex message. There is also, for example, an exhibition space under the monument to the murdered Jews of Europe, in Berlin. The combination with a building for collection, research, and/or exhibition operation also allows architecture to become a monumental medium for the inscription and representation of the remembered theme in the urban/landscape space, where the usually very limited, fixed message of architecture is confronted by the active museum operation, which leaves room for research and debate, rather than blocking it off and 'closing' it with a monument. Examples, with different architectural representations, are:

- *Symbolic figuration* - The *Jüdisches Museum* in Berlin, an extension of the city museum, inaugurated in 2001, is a typical example of this. The architecture (Daniel Libeskind) in both exterior and interior depicts a brokenness and, in addition to exhibition spaces, absence and emptiness are monumentalised. However, the symbolic narrative of this figurative monumentality has also been the subject of criticism.

- *Abstraction, scale, materiality* - The Kazerne Dossin: Memorial, Museum and Documentation Center on Holocaust and Human Rights, in Malines, inaugurated in 2012. Opposite the building of the historic Dossin Barracks, which was used as a transit camp for Jews and Gypsies, a serene, silent monolithic museum building was erected (AWG architects), housing a museum and documentation centre.
- *Documentary figuration* - *Casa della memoria*, Milan, inaugurated in 2015: a headquarters for several associations active in the memory of persons and events of the resistance, liberation and foundation of the republic (AVITER, ANED, ANPI, Associazione Piazza Fontana 12 dicembre 1969 and INSMLI) with archives and consultation space, and project areas for the public. On the four exterior walls of the simple building, a brick pattern depicts historic photographs of well-chosen portraits of individuals and events from the resistance, liberation and founding of the republic.

c) Counter-monuments

For one kind of artistic interpretation of the *Mahnmal*, James E. Young advanced the term *Counter-Monument*: these are contemporary art in public space projects that counter the expectation of uniformity and permanence, and expect active reflection - '*the act of memory*' - from the viewer: 'By shaping its temporality and even celebrating the change of its form over time and in space, the counter-monument rejects the untenable premises of the traditional monument' (Young 2003: 244). The typical example is the Monument to Peace and Against War and Fascism, inaugurated in 1986 in Hamburg, and a work by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz: a 12-meter-high square-prismatic column, on which citizens/visitors were expected to make inscriptions, which then disappears into the ground, per 1.5 meters of full marks/inscriptions, until the entire column becomes invisible. However, this concrete project also received unforeseen uses that the artists and the government tried to curtail and has also been criticised for misplaced monument-iconoclasm and a sham activation of the public, more concerned with the monument object than with the content to be commemorated and questioned (Stubblefield 2011).

The notion of the counter-monument nevertheless remains important as a reminder that the task of developing a monument is, for contemporary artists-architects-writers and for contemporary culture more generally, a difficult one around which numerous tensions play out that may or may not find a place in the monument itself. In the case of monuments to decolonisation, a reflection on the notion and role of monuments within (post)colonial culture (in the 'metropolis') can also be the subject of monument projects.

The above already shows that various visual and other cultural disciplines can be mobilised: contemporary visual art (sculpture, new-media installations, etc.), street art, 'artivism', poetry, architecture, landscape design, public space construction, etc.

More relevant, however, than the designation of disciplines, is perhaps the designation of potentially relevant visual language in the development of new monuments:

- place marking of meaningful sites;
- In situ theming of the historical/social colonial stratification of a place;
- elementary geometry;
- participation and process;

- interpretive replication of historical objects, buildings, etc.;
- the appropriated and critically processed 'archive' (in a broad sense: colonial archives and collections, artistic and architectural heritage, memory);
- urban culture and diversity (in colonial and postcolonial Belgium, but also in the (then segregated) cities of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi);
- modern (post) colonial materiality, modes of production, ecologies;
- *displacement*;
- the postcolonial (utopian) imagination;
- …

Applications of (combinations of) such imagery are also currently found in concrete contemporary artworks, which also suggest possibilities for contemporary monuments. Four examples of works on view during the summer of 2021 at Congoville in the Middelheim Museum in Antwerp:

- Sammi Baloji, *The Other Memorial* (2015)
- Ângela Ferreira, *Indépendance Cha Cha* (2014/2021)
- Jean Katambayi, *MM / Afrolampe* (2021)
- Bodys Isek Kingelez, *Prismacongo* (2000) and other works

Baloji's work, a half copper dome, refers to the copper dome of the *Église du Sacré-Coeur de Cointe* in Liège, a memorial church for allied soldiers killed in WWI. The copper of the dome comes from the mines of Katanga, the result of Congolese forced labour, while the Congolese soldiers are not memorialised in the church. The Brussels-based Lushois Baloji now honours them with this artwork, applying motifs that reference the Luba and Lunda scarifications, a practice that was forbidden by colonial authorities, but ethnographically studied and documented. Baloji's work is thus also an example of a re-appropriation of colonial archives and of pre-colonial Congolese intangible heritage.

FIG. 34. Sammy Baloji, *The Other Memorial*, 2015. (copper, motifs of scarring from different Congolese communities found in ethnographic archives).
Coll. Fondation Sindika Dokolo, Luanda. Photo: Galerie Imane Fares with the authorization of the artist.

The installation-sculptures of Angolan Ângela Ferreira and Congolese Jean Katambayi both use partial and rescaled replicas, or re-materialisations of colonial buildings in Lubumbashi, which also evoke the modern reality of colonial society and counter the ahistorical nature image of Sub-Saharan Africans in Belgian colonial monuments. In the first case, a wooden fragment of the façade of a tropical modernist

fuel station designed by Belgian architect Claude Strebelle for the '*Ville Europeénne*' of Elisabeth City; in the second case, the framework of a miner's house from the cité of the UMHK-Gécamines where Katambayi grew up. In both cases, a more complex narrative that incorporates symbols and individual memories is developed with other elements. Ferreira's installation also documents the building in Lubumbashi, for example, and shows video footage of an earlier performance of a miners' song about the horrors of the mines, and of the hit Indépendance Cha Cha by the Congolese orchestra African Jazz. Katambayi also evokes with copper wires the modernity of electricity and light, its applications in the West and its unreliability in today's city.

Finally, the scale models of Bodys Isek Kingelez (born 1948 in Kembembele in Belgian Congo, died 2015 in Kinshasa) are colourful architectural fantasies that refer to aspects of real Kinshasa, against which they also react and which they sometimes invert, in combination with architectural and urban components from cities around the world. They are powerful imaginings, and references to a different, better possible postcolonial world.

III. Inauguration rituals and new commemorative events

Collective commemoration not only needs commemorative sites (in urban space) but is also about inscribing commemoration in time. Attention should be paid to:

- the dates of inaugurations, which may refer to anniversaries of historical events;
- establishing commemorative days, for example:
    - a day of remembrance for the victims of Belgian colonisation;
    - commemorative moments for celebrating urban diversity and inclusiveness.

With well-chosen names, commemorative activities in well-chosen places, involvement of organisations, political leaders, etc.

The Zinneke parade is an example of a newly established tradition, a new urban parade dedicated to urban diversity and inclusiveness.

IV. Art in public space (related to decoloniality and inclusiveness)

A fourth form of bringing new content into the urban public space is contemporary art, without being art in the capacity of new monuments in the strict sense.

After all, art in public spaces, whether in temporary or permanent form, can also come about within the framework of the beautification, completion or cultural programming of public spaces, or end up there can be realized on the initiative of artists and curators, without an ambition to speak 'in the name of'.

The importance of such artworks may lie in the fact that the artists in question are not required to interpret a commission or question, but rather to interpret their own themes and experiences, to take up critical positions. A whole range can appear here, from autonomous visual work and street art to critical-archival and 'artivist' work.

Art in public space by artists of Sub-Saharan African descent can also add to the representation, and inclusion, of persons of Sub-Saharan descent in public space, i.e. partially independently of the thematic contents of that work.

5.3.3 Preserve and manage historical traces/relics as documents and urban anchors for critical history and decolonial awareness

Decolonising public space is not only about dealing with the intentional colonial monuments and street names that receive the most attention today as they are contested for their venerating memorialization. As previously stated, it is also about questioning transmitted historical narratives on the basis of other readings of the historical facts from the colonial and postcolonial past, and about giving a place and a voice to the perspectives that were not given a place in the official memory culture: first and foremost, the perspective of (people descended from) colonised people, of non-white people, in Brussels and Belgium. In this, (non-intentional) historic monuments also play a role.

The immovable and movable heritage in Brussels' public space can then serve both as a historical source and as a local anchor point for (decolonial) historical knowledge transfer and heritage practices. It is not only about tangibile heritage, but also about intangible heritage - from linguistic diversity to culinary or musical practices and traditions. This therefore concerns focus areas and strategies within the domain and the instruments of institutional heritage care in the Region, municipalities, etc.

It should also be noted here that the more or less contested intentional monuments - statues, plaques and toponomy - are also part of the achive of traces that inform about the colonial period. This means that the strategies discussed below can also be applied to them, in addition to the strategies discussed in 5.3.2, even if a tension (related to conflicting heritage values) sometimes exists between them: the management of historic heritage is typically still focused on maximum unchanged material preservation, while the nature of intentional monuments implies either practices of affirmative preservation or just rejecting iconoclasm, removal or modification.

Finally, what is at stake here more broadly is the social quest for a 21st-century decolonial heritage regime (incl. ways of valueing, management, official and unofficial heritage practices):

- which recognises that historical heritage is itself a modern Western category and has played a (historical) role within a colonial discourse of (European) 'civilisation', 'history', and 'progress'.
- in which the colonial heritage in the former 'metropolis', like the colonial heritage in the former 'colony', is valued as a *'patrimoine partagé*', with recognition of all the asymmetries that permeate this shared past;
- which seeks the possible recognition of different and evolving individual and collective identifications and valuations of concrete 'heritage objects'.
- which recognises not only the claims and authority of disciplinary experts (historians, art historians, archaeologists, urban sociologists, etc.) but also of other stakeholders:
    - residents, including persons of Belgian, Congolese, Rwandan, Burundian, or other descent;
    - (former) institutions/companies with a colonial dimension, their (former) employees;
- in which there is room for dialogue and *regards croisés*, for demonstrable knowledge and rational argumentation, but also for the (positive and/or negative) affective experience and involvement with heritage;

- in which colonial and postcolonial heritage is understood as a social-cultural practice in the present, actively forging relationships with the (societies of) the past and the future.

5.3.3.1 inventory, selective protection, study, publication, access

First, this presupposes a broadening thematic focus of all aspects of official heritage management, from study and thematic inventory campaigns, through targeted protection to public access. In this way, urban sites and other forms of heritage that are currently not or barely visible/known and/or appreciated by the general public can also find their place in Brussels' collective heritage. Relevant themes for that thematic broadening were already explored and provided, with examples, in *Chapter 3*:

- What are meaningful places of collective memory in Brussels for former colonial actors, people of Congolese, Burundian or Rwandan origin, or the general public?
- What are representative or rare testimonies, in the Brussels urban space, of Brussels as the capital of the colonial metropolis, regarding:
    - the conquest of the Congo;
    - the colonial administration of Congo Free State and Belgian Congo;
    - the economic exploitation of and trade with the colony;
    - the use of materials from the colony;
    - missionary work, education in the colony;
    - the scientific and cultural contributions to colonisation, and the processing and appropriation of colonial realities;
    - colonial media culture, propaganda and official representation (in the capital);
    - financing urban projects and buildings with profits from colonial exploitation?
- What are representative or rare testimonies of the actions and/or presence of colonised persons and their descendants in Brussels during the colonial period?
- What are representative or rare testimonies of postcolonial migrations from the former Belgian colony and mandate territories?

These last two questions in particular also presuppose exploratory inventory work within and outside the methods of traditional literature and archival research - also via oral history interviews, focus groups, etc - and the active involvement of (organisations of) persons originating from the former Belgian colony and mandate areas in Brussels and Belgium.

It should also be noted that concrete urban 'objects' and 'places of memory' may simultaneously be historically involved in several of the above thematic scopes - and thus may be layered and conflictually 'over-determined'. Matonge, which has historically housed many colonial associations, is one example.

<u>Appreciative and problematising narratives.</u>

Second, it is also about updating the lenses of appreciation:

- so that patrimony that is currently recognised for other reasons (e.g. Hôtel Van Eetvelde) can also be recognised as colonial heritage, and the colonial dimensions can be included in the heritage narratives surrounding these 'heritage objects';
- so that the colonial 'heritage archive' can be read both 'with the grain' (including perspectives of the metropolis) and 'against the grain' (including untold stories);

- so that in the heritage understanding and valuation of concrete 'objects' there is not only room for the 'addition' of different heritage values, but also for the tensions between the different heritage valuations of an 'object';
- so that the handling of material heritage would also be linked to a focus on the intangible heritage and immaterial aspects of the material heritage, such as representations of Belgium and Brussels from the former Belgian colony and mandate areas;
- so that making explicit the (post)colonial dimensions in heritage objects and valuations, also within official heritage care, can provide frameworks and arguments for the preservation and management of this heritage.

This requires implementation within, and the possible adaptation of, existing formats of heritage inventories and conservation motivations. Thematic inventories and protection initiatives should not merely lead to a separate inventory of colonial and postcolonial heritage, but should be integrated into the tools and operations of Brussels heritage management. Thematic publications, narratives, actions within heritage days, and so on, are recommended to make decolonial perspectives and dialogue public.

5.3.3.2 Marking and informing in situ, on the scale of building/site in public space, but also on the micro scale

The colonial layer in Brussels' urban and architectural heritage is barely visible or made legible today. In situ markings and interpretations with text and image allow the interrelatedness of places, buildings, and infrastructure in the Belgian colonial past (administrative, economic, social, cultural) to be brought out more strongly. This also applies to the heritage linked to the historical presence of people from former Belgian Africa in Brussels.

Information panels

Markings and explanations can be placed visibly in public space, but sometimes also in the interiors of (publicly accessible) buildings, at meaningful places and elements. While we pointed out earlier, in *§5.2*, that signs, apps, and QR codes, do not sufficiently counter the colonial message and visual power of *intentional* colonial monuments and align with what current society wants to convey, adding historical interpretation does remain important in the case of *non-intentional monuments* (historical traces). It allows them to be highlighted and used as anchor points for critical historical narratives about the colonial past and the historic presence of African persons in Brussels, as well as for decolonial awareness-raising. Given the importance of oral history, apps like *Ethnoally* also allow visitors to public spaces to add their own information about locations, buildings, sites, neighbourhoods, colonial and postcolonial traces and symbols, etc.

Symbolic markings

Markings with thematic graphic symbols, for example, on façades, at the entrance of sites or along the street, can also mark places and buildings more visually. In doing so, the repetition works accumulatively and can reveal layers of colonial history interwoven in the city or clusters of relics.

The issue here is to consider whether uniform visual marking makes sense, how widely or selectively it should be applied, and what, if any, links to official inventory or protection are desirable.

Compare with:

- 'protected monument' logo;
- '*Stolpersteine*' (stumbling stones): project by artist Gunter Demnig; brass stones placed in the pavement of public spaces commemorate individual victims of National Socialism around and during World War II, in front of the last home of these victims. Note: the *Stolpersteine* are an example of scattered visual markers, but not markers of (thematic) historical heritage; they are diffuse memorials to victims, markers of absence.

Guided walks and publications

Walking maps and publications, as well as guided walks as organised by *Bakushinta*, *Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Lutte contre les Discriminations* and *Bamko* today, work in a complementary way: they open space for more complexity in the narrative, for connections, but also for dialogue and encounters around the heritage. Publications, for example in the series *Brussels, City of Art and History,* on colonial and postcolonial heritage can be considered an official recognition of these types of heritage.

In some cases, a thematic *tour* through a site or building may also be relevant:

Example:

- *Decolonising the Chicago Cultural Center* was the title of a publication (Chicago Architecture Biennial: 2019) by the organisation *Settler Colonial City Project*, which guided a walking tour and temporary curatorial interventions at the *Chicago Cultural Center*.

See also the discussion of the sub-strategy 'thematic reallocation' (cf. *§5.3.1*) and the museum interpretation of the *Palais de la Porte Dorée* in Paris, as part of the *Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration*, which can be understood as a maximal variant of this.

A more permanent routing through and management of a neighbourhood or site (such as the Parc du Cinquantenaire, cf. *Chapter 7*) with many traces is also possible; it can then be accessed and designed like an urban archaeological park (albeit over a more recent past than usual) (integrating the design of public space and in situ heritage marking and explanation).

Punctual art interventions

Finally, in situ artworks (permanent or temporary) can also mark, interpret or problematise a building's colonial and postcolonial heritage dimension.

For example:

- Lars Ramberg, *Zweifel*, 2005 (temporary intervention on the contested *lieu de mémoire* of the former GDR *Palast der Republik* in Berlin, which at the time was the subject of a debate over its preservation or replacement with a reconstruction of the

former Prussian baroque city castle). The artist applied '*Zweifel*' (doubt) in illuminated letters to the roof of the then vacant *Palast der Republik*.

- Hans Haacke, *Der Bevölkerung*, 2000 (permanent intervention in a courtyard garden of the Reichstags building in Berlin; including a new text inscription '*Der Bevölkerung*' ('for the people') that answers the original inscription above the entrance to the parliament building '*Dem deutschen Volke*' (for the German people) and problematises the people-population tension in relation to representation and democracy)

5.3.3.3 Temporary *in situ* exhibitions, programming

At certain times, temporary exhibitions, open heritage days, and other 'in situ' programming can also draw attention to certain visible or invisible traces and dimensions of the colonial past and of a history of the presence of people from the former Belgian colony and mandate territories in Belgium and Brussels. These may be historical exhibitions, exhibitions of contemporary art, or other cultural programming. Collaborations with scientific institutions, Sub-Saharan African organisations and individuals in the artistic field are possible, as are links with archives and other heritage institutions, for example, and with existing recurring events, such as the *Heritage Days*, *Brussels art nouveau & art deco festival* (BANAD), Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Europalia...

Examples:

- Congoville. Contemporary Artists Tracing Colonial Tracks (2021): Exhibition curated by Sandrine Colard with contemporary art, which on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Congolese independence, capitalised on the colonial history of the site of the Antwerp Middelheim Museum and the nearby former Colonial University (whose building is now part of UAntwerp's Campus Middelheim).[24]
- Arts Congo Eza, curated by Anne Wetsi Mpoma, an exhibition at the Parc du Warande in Brussels, which featured the work of Congolese artists and Belgian artists of Congolese descent in 2020, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of Congolese independence.
- *Les clichés allemands* (1917-1918). Belgium's Art Patrimony through the Lens of the Occupier (2017): Including in the Parc du Warande in Brussels. Confronted existing and vanished artistic heritage from Brussels, with (reproductions from) historical photo archives. It told of the heritage documentation and politics of the German occupation during World War I, and of the change in documented heritage over the past century.

5.3.3.3 Permanent (or temporary) exhibitions and programming in museums, heritage institutions

It is desirable that the authorities of the Brussels-Capital Region encourage all museums on its territory, regardless of their supervisory authority (e.g. regional, federal, etc.) or the nature of their collections, to pay attention to the (historical) colonial dimensions of their domain/discipline, to the Belgian colonial history and traces of it in their own institution

[24] COLARD, S., BOON, P. (ed.), *Congoville. Contemporary Artists Tracing Colonial Tracks / Hedendaagse kunstenaars bewandelen koloniale sporen*, Leuven University Press, Leuven, 2021.

or elsewhere in Brussels, and to the history of the presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Brussels.

This ranges from the museum of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, to the Halle Gate Museum (KMKG) which discusses the urban history of Brussels, the Archives and Museum of Flemish Life in Brussels, the MigratieMuseumMigration in Molenbeek-Saint-Jean and the new museum KANAL-Pompidou and the CIVA.

(In *§5.1.* the recommendation was already made that a museum on Brussels and Belgium's colonial and postcolonial past and present be established. The interaction with museum collections and exhibition work was also already discussed in *§5.2.* with the issue of the destination of removed sculptures, place name signs).

5.4 From analyses to interventions: developing scenarios between argument and imagination, between need and opportunity

Previous sections have discussed various (partial) strategies for dealing with intentional colonial memorials and other colonial traces and symbols in public space. Developing scenarios and deciding to apply one strategy in one case, and another in another case, must take into account and depend on the combined considerations of:

5. 'OBJECT': the properties, heritage valuations and critical evaluation from a decolonial point of view of the individual 'object' (the latter is applied for a selection of cases in *Chapter 4*). In the decolonial analysis/problematisation of, say, an intentional monument, there is not only an assessment of how urgent and important it is. The critical issues that come to the fore, can be the starting point for the substantive development of new narratives and intervention strategies.
6. 'STRATEGIES': the overall considerations (possibilities, advantages and disadvantages) among the different possible (partial) strategies with regard to existing/new colonial traces and symbols, as described (cf. *§5.2., §5.3.* and *§5.4.*). This sometimes makes them more or less suitable for specific objects and for the narratives to be developed.
7. 'COMBINATION': possible substantive and practical interactions and opportunities in the combination or distribution of 'objects', themes and strategies, in dealing with different memory sites and interventions in the city (cf. *§5.1.*).
8. 'CITY': the different nature and the diverse local or capital representative importance of different concrete public spaces, streets, squares, parks, neighbourhoods, urban developments, and the presence of partners and stakeholders in the city.

Developing scenarios and coming to decisions is best done iteratively, in sequential and recurring steps: in this report, in *chapter 7*, we already make concrete recommendations for some definitive colonial traces and symbols, as parts of a departure scenario, which needs to be further developed and become the object of public conversation. We also

propose that a regional plan be drawn up, in which broad outlines are set out that can provide a basis for further decisions; these are then further tested and fleshed out in cooperation with other authorities and actors, and through a citizens' dialogue around both the broad outlines and specific dossiers.

The development of persuasive and appropriate interventions does not follow a linear and conclusive road-map, nor an absolute if-then logic, but the above considerations should be regular components of these processes. It presupposes systematic research and analysis, but also dialogue and processes for imagining creative scenarios. A scenario should be the result of reasoned argumentative conversation, but argumentation is never sufficient to develop a scenario or choose from several possible scenarios. Probing and developing public support and making clear choices, is equally important. Argumentation based on clear analysis and objectives, narratives that connect, and imagining of future possibilities, are all important here.

CHAPTER 6
LEGAL APPROACHES TO COLONIAL SYMBOLS IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

Even if there is no specific legal framework for colonial symbols in the public space, some elements may clarify its legal scope (Section 1). There are various regulations that address questions that may arise when dealing with these symbols. These regulations can prove useful in guiding the process, while requiring governments to conform to them, such as the regulations on protecting heritage (Section 2), on urban and regional planning (Section 3), or the rules around changing street names (Section 4). In addition, criminal law limits the scope for action with respect to colonial symbols by constraining certain offences, such as vandalism and damage to monuments (Section 5). Finally, issues may also arise around the intellectual property rights of some of these colonial symbols (Section 6). Nevertheless, after analysing the existing law, it is interesting to make more critical considerations about the relationship between law, heritage, and politics (Section 7), before formulating some exploratory ideas related to the evolution of the law in this regard (Section 8).

6.1. The legal scope of colonial symbols in the public space

Before analysing the various existing avenues for approaching the concept of 'colonial symbols in the public space', it is useful to examine the scope of the report: colonial symbols (A) in the public space (B) and their translation in the law.

A. The colonial symbols refer to a variety of assets with a colonial character

First, the **concept of 'colonial symbols'** does not find direct resonance in the law. It is not defined in any international, European, national or Brussels legal text.

We do find a reference in the Resolution of the Brussels Parliament of 17 July 2020, which states in its introduction that the Resolution concerns the (freely translated by *) '*symbols associated with colonisation and the colonial period in public spaces'*, and also refers to '*colonial vestiges*' or '*colonial heritage'*. Elsewhere, the Resolution calls for '*an inventory of the names of streets, avenues, boulevards, squares, monuments, parks, statues, public buildings, which bear the legacy of Belgium's colonial past*'. This sums up what the members of parliament mean by 'colonial symbols'.

These symbols would therefore refer to a **wide range of assets**, mainly immovable but also movable objects – we will come back to this below – as well as immaterial elements such as street names, all of which have a colonial character. This diversity is explored in Chapter 3, which examines the need for an inventory, however complex, as demonstrated by the historian Chantal Kesteloot with respect to Brussels' street names[25]. As such, the scope is broad and evolving, and is determined by the potential links to the colonial context.

[25] See C. Kesteloot, "De la rue Léopold au boulevard Albert II. Monarchie et odonymie bruxelloise", *La Revue Nouvelle*, 2020, no. 4, p. 46-54. See also the references in Section 4 of this chapter.

B. The public space belongs primarily to the public domain, but extends beyond it

The **term 'public space' is not further defined in Belgian law either**. The Brussels Spatial Planning Code (CoBAT/BWRO) mentions the term repeatedly, specifically among its objectives, Article 4/1, paragraph 2, without, however, clarifying what the author of the code means by this term (freely translated by *):

> *'All interventions in the public space and on the road network concerning marking, equipment or fixtures, requested and carried out by a public authority, are acts and works concerning the road network and public space within the meaning of the first paragraph.'*

As there is no clear definition, several elements must be examined in order to clarify the scope of the report.

Firstly, it is quite clear that, given the qualification 'public', the term public space refers to **immovable assets that in principle belong to a legal entity under public law** (State, Region, Community, municipality, etc.), meaning that these assets should logically be part of the **public space of this public owner**.

Indeed, public property distinguishes the private from the public domain. The private domain is everything that is not part of the public domain, while the public domain is considered everything '*that is intended for the use of all or for a public service*' (see Article 3.45 of the new Civil Code, which entered into force on 1 September 2021). The distinction between public domain and private domain is not a simple one and is blurred on account of more assets being included in the private domain.

Moreover, the public owner may also grant concessions to private individuals. For example, some public spaces may be managed by private individuals under public domain concessions.

Second, the line between this public space – essentially the public domain – and private property is not always easy to draw. For example, the Regional Urban Development Regulations (RRU/GSV)[26] uses the term **building line**, defined as '*the boundary between the public right-of-way and surrounding properties*' (Article 2.3 of Title I of the RRU/GSV). In addition, there is the concept of 'immediate vicinity', which is the area adjacent to the structure and includes:

a) the rear construction strip[27]
b) where applicable, the lateral indentation strip[28]
c) the area for courtyards and gardens'[29] (Article 2.1 Title I RRU/GSV)

[26] Order of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region of 21 November 2006, *BOG*, 19 December 2006.

[27] 'Rear construction strip: part of the site located between the building line and the construction line' (Art. 2.25 Title I RRU/GSV); the construction line is the 'main surface formed by all the front façades of the structures and which may indent in relation to the building line' (Art. 2.13 Title I RRU/GSV).

[28] 'Lateral indentation strip: part of the site located between the rear construction strip and the courtyard and garden area that extends from the side of the structure to the lateral boundary of the site' (Article 2.7 Title I RRU/GSV).

[29] 'area for courtyards and gardens: the undeveloped or as yet unbuilt, above-ground portion of the site, not including the rear construction strip and the lateral indentation strip' (Article 2.26 Title I RRU/GSV).

Article 3 of Title I of the RRU/GSV uses diagrams to show how the building line is laid, either against the façade or on the construction line:

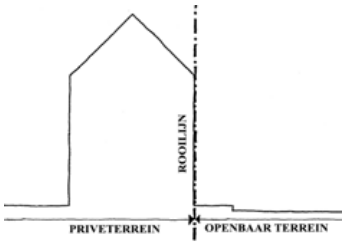

Fig. 1A. Placement on the building line

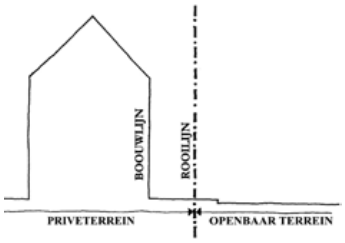

Fig. 1B. Placement on the construction line

Third, and following on from this distinction between what belongs to the public owner (or their public domain) and what belongs to a private owner, some **spaces may be privately owned but open to the public**. One example is the Galeries Saint Hubert in Brussels, which are privately owned but are charged with an ingress easement so that the public can access them. We can also mention the case of museums: public museums, which are accessible to the public and located in the public domain, could be included in this notion of public space. Conversely, private museums (e.g. the Van Buuren Museum in Uccle), although open to the public, are difficult to include in the strict definition of the concept of public space, as they are more like private assets that are open to the public, like the Galeries Saint Hubert.

Fourth, it is not always easy to distinguish the assets in this public space from the public space itself. Indeed, it is quite possible that **the assets located in the public space do not belong to the owner of the public space**, in other words they are not part of the regional or municipal property, but are owned by private individuals or another public owner. For example, around the statue of Leopold II in Place du Trône, the rights of the federal state – the owner of the statue – and the Royal Donation – the owner of the pedestal – would intertwine. The subscribers to the statue would however not have any ownership rights, having rather the status of investors.

Finally, some rules apply to property - public or private - that is not in the public space but is ***visible*** **from the public space.** As such, Title VI ‘Advertising and signboards’ of the RRU/GSV applies to:

> *‘the acts and works that are visible from the public space, even when located on private property. The Title therefore refers to all advertising messages and signboards visible from the public space, placed on a support, structure or permanent establishment. On the other hand, advertising and signboards placed,*

for example, in metro stations, in shops or shopping galleries, fall outside the scope of the regulations when they are not visible from the public space.'

Colonial symbols that are located on private property (a home or shop with colonial elements or built with materials sourced from the colonies), but that are *visible* from public spaces, could therefore also fall under a broader interpretation of the scope of the report.

In the context of the present report, the concept of public space is understood in its broadest sense, taking into account not only the public domain, but also the private spaces accessible to the public, the private assets located in the public space, and the private or public assets visible from the public space, in other words any space clearly visible to the public. However, for spaces belonging to a private owner, other rules will have to be envisaged which respect private ownership.

It therefore seems impossible to oblige a private owner to move their property, let alone demolish it, without taking a legislative measure, at the risk of disregarding the basic right of respect for property (Article 16 of the Constitution and Article 1 of the First Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights). Where applicable, compensation should be envisaged.

Alterations to this public space, for example by installing an information board or a contemporary artwork, presuppose the application of an approval process, as we discuss further below. In addition, when elements of the public domain (i.e. in the narrow sense of the public space) must be removed or demolished, it would be necessary to first *deaccession* them, insofar as these elements are no longer intended for the use of all or for the public service.

6.2. Colonial symbols in the rules relating to spatial planning and urban development law

The Brussels Spatial Planning Code (CoBAT/BWRO) has introduced a comprehensive series of regulations on spatial planning, in particular in terms of the administrative permits required for an application to modify, relocate an immovable or movable asset, such as one of a colonial nature, within the public space, as well as outside it.

For any intervention made on a colonial symbol, a procedure must be followed in accordance with the CoBAT/BWRO when it results in a modification of the public space (addition of a work of art, removal of a sculpture, installation of an information board, etc.). In addition, specific procedures must be followed if the colonial symbol is protected by cultural heritage rules (also in the CoBAT/BWRO, Article 206 et seq. see Section 3).

For example, an urban development permit must be applied for according to the procedure stipulated in Articles 98 et seq. of the CoBAT/BWRO. The same articles also stipulate the interventions and works that do not require a permit. In addition, by virtue of Articles 175 et seq. there are cases in which the planning permit must be issued by the authorised official, sometimes with the prior advice of the College of Mayor and Aldermen.

Under the rules enshrined in the CoBAT/BWRO, the territory is also laid out by means of zoning plans - regional (PRAS/GBP) or municipal (Special Zoning Plan - PPAS/BBP) - which can impose restrictions on the layout of spaces, resulting in a change of plan when, for example, a statue needs to be removed. However, it is very rare for such a zoning plan to specifically mandate that a (non-protected) monument must stay where it is. As far as we know, the only example of this is the PPAS/BBP Pentagone 07-02 *Pacheco*, of which Article 2.9.4.1 stipulates (freely translated):

> *'The artworks integrated into the site (monumental sculpture erected at zone A2 side Montagne de l'Oratoire, sculpture in the playground, sculpture erected at the foot of the Tour des Finances) should be placed and highlighted in the area of public transit.'*[30]

In general, the BBPs allow some flexibility for preserving statues or monuments, without imposing the preservation of specific works, as in the case of the PPAS/BBP *Pacheco*. In the latter case, spatial planning law imposes additional restrictions, like easements, which can be waived if the correct procedures are followed. Changing a PRAS/GBP or PPAS/BBP can sometimes result in the obligation to draw up an environmental impact report[31], even if exceptions apply to smaller changes or small areas at the local level[32].

These procedural rules for both obtaining an urban development permit and for changes/deviations from the layout plans of the territory (a much rarer hypothesis than that of the urban development permit), again do not detract from the substance, but frame any treatment of colonial symbols in the public space and must be applied.

For example, the statue of Leopold II in Place du Trône is in an exempted zone, but is not protected per se. This means that a relocation or dismantling requires an urban development permit, with the advice of the consultation committee, but not that of the Royal Commission on Monuments and Sites (CRMS/KCML).

[30] These are sculptures by Jean-Pierre Ghysels, Albert Aelby and Nat Neujean, http://urbanisme-bruxelles.hsp.be/sites/urbanisme-bruxelles.hsp.be/files/prescriptions%2007-02.pdf

[31] See Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, transposed by Ordinance of 18 March 2004 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment, BOG, 30 March 2004.

[32] Article 5, § 3 of the above-mentioned Ordinance.

6.3. Colonial symbols protected as cultural heritage

Certain colonial symbols are protected as cultural heritage, which implies the application of the specific rules (A), including the implementation of the stipulated procedures (B).

A. Assets registered in the inventory, assets registered in the preservation list, protected assets, exempted zone

The CoBAT/BWRO provides for measures of various degrees: **registration in the inventory, registration on the preservation list, protection, exemption zone**. In addition, Article 206 of the CoBAT/BWRO specifies the elements that may be the subject of a protective measure:

> *'1° immovable heritage: all immovable assets with historic, archaeological, artistic, aesthetic, scientific, social, technical or folklore-related value, namely:*
>
> *a) as a monument: any notable work, including the equipment or decorative elements integral to it;*
>
> *b) as a whole: any group of immovable assets that forms an urban entity or a village entity that is sufficiently coherent to be topographically delineated and is notable for its homogeneity or for its integration into its environment;*
>
> *c) as a site: any work of nature or of man or of both together, with no or partial construction and demonstrating spatial coherence;*
>
> *d) as an archaeological site: any site, geological formation, building, entity, or landscape that contains or may contain archaeological assets.'*

For example, the statue of Emile Storms on the Square de Meeûs along with the square itself has been protected as a site since 1972.[33] Similarly, the memorial called 'Congo Monument' in the Parc du Cinquantenaire together with the whole of the Parc du Cinquantenaire has been protected as a site since 17 November 1976. In the Brussels heritage inventory, one may find the sculpture 'Runaway black slaves are attacked by dogs' or the sculpture 'Monument to the colonial pioneers of the municipality of Ixelles'

[33] https://monument.heritage.brussels/nl/buildings/38217

on Place de la Croix-Rouge. Other assets with a colonial character may be considered elements of a whole or of a site, protected or registered on the inventory. In the latter hypothesis, it is interesting to emphasise that the protection of a colonial symbol as an *element* of a whole or of a site does not necessarily mean that this element is protected as such, although it may be so in a supplementary or incidental way. In other words, the relocation or removal of protection of such an element should not detract from the heritage character of the site or the whole that should remain protected. From a legal perspective, the procedures outlined below for these elements obviously need to be followed, but it may also be useful in justifying whether or not to accept a permit for the relocation or removal of protection of a colonial symbol.

Conversely, certain assets are not heritage as such, but belong to an 'exemption zone' around a protected asset. For example, the statue of Leopold II on a horse at Place du Trône is in an exemption zone around the Académie Royale de Belgique, which is protected as a monument. This means that, '*all interventions and works, which are of such a nature that they alter the view of the asset belonging to the immovable heritage, or from that asset, are bound by the advice of the Royal Commission on Monuments and Sites, as well as the advice of the consultation committee*' (Article 237 CoBAT/BWRO).

The vast majority of assets protected by the CoBAT/BWRO as cultural heritage is **immovable property**, either by incorporation (see Article 3.47 of the new Civil Code: '*All structures and plantings which, being incorporated into immovable property by their nature, form an inherent part thereof, are immovable by incorporation'. Inherent components of these structures and plantations are also immovable by incorporation, regardless of whether they are incorporated*.'), or by destination (Article 3.47 of the new Civil Code: '*Accessoria of an immovable property are deemed to be immovable by destination*.'). As such, **statues are works that are incorporated into the ground, just like 'memorials' or other sculptures**. On the other hand, some statues may be immovable by destination when they are not suspended from the ground but placed in a special niche, for example.

Nevertheless, as they are not incorporated into the ground (immovable by their nature), some of them may not be considered immovable but movable, thus falling outside the scope of the protection of immovable heritage. Therefore, if the aim is to keep these definitively detached objects - i.e. without being reincorporated into or destined for an immovable property - protected as cultural heritage, reference must be made to the ordinance of 25 April 2019 on the movable and intangible cultural heritage of the Brussels-Capital Region. This ordinance establishes the authority of the Brussels Region to protect some movable cultural assets, including those that are detached from immovable property and/or the ground.

B. The procedures to be followed in the event of relocation, deletion from the list or demolition of assets protected as cultural heritage

The protective measures relating to the assets registered in the inventory or in the preservation list or which are protected require a specific procedure to be followed in order to decide on their fate.

For example, if the aim is to **relocate** a **protected asset**, an urban development permit is required that is subject to the unanimous opinion of the Royal Commission on Monuments and Sites (CRMS/KCML) (Article 177, § 2, 2° CoBAT/BWRO). If the protection of the property is to be **lifted** because, for example, it is considered that its heritage value no longer exists – which presupposes that the property can be modified or relocated if necessary, and even demolished if the individual in question owns it – the lifting procedure must be followed, including a 15-day public inquiry and a favourable opinion from the CRMS/KCML under Article 239 of the CoBAT/BWRO.

If the asset is registered on the **preservation list**, it can be **deleted from the list** or the special preservation conditions may be changed according to the procedure described in Article 220 CoBAT/BWRO. In addition, it is possible to **demolish** an asset registered on the preservation list in accordance with the procedure in article 215 CoBAT/BWRO: decision of the mayor with the approval of the Brussels Government (within 40 days).

If the asset is **registered on the inventory**, it can be **relocated** after an urban development permit is issued:

> *'Every application for an urban development permit, parcelling permit or urban development certificate that relates to an asset registered on the inventory of immovable heritage is subject to the advice of the consultation committee. The Royal Commission on Monuments and Sites shall only be consulted at the request of the consultation committee.' (Article 207, § 1 CoBAT/BWRO)*

What the CoBAT/BWRO does not mention separately is that an asset registered on the inventory can, of course, be **deleted from the list** by the same procedure as the registration, by analogy.

In this sense, the legislation may prove to be restrictive. However, as long as the procedure is followed, the outcome, so to speak, is not dictated by the law. Rather, the way a protected asset of a colonial nature is handled depends on:

- the desire to initiate the relocation, lifting, deletion from the list or demolition procedure;
- the recommendations of the CRMS/KCML and/or the consultation committee;
- the urban development permit/decision to lift/delete/demolish that may or may not be granted by the competent public authority (Region or municipality);
- (it may also possibly depend on the judicial review exercised on the administrative act, which could result in the annulment and/or suspension of the act in question).

The **initiative** may be taken by various parties, which makes things easier since it does not depend solely on the owner of the protected asset.

For a **relocation**, the permit is applied for in principle by the owner or by another person with rights in rem, or by another requesting party but accompanied by information provided to the latter (see Article 6 of the Decree of 12 December 2013 of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region laying down the composition of the file for the application for an urban development permit, *BOG*, 12 March 2014).

The **application for the lifting of protection** can be made by five different parties:

'The Government shall lay down the procedure either on its own initiative, or on the proposal of the Royal Commission for Monuments and Sites, or on the request of:

1° the College of Mayor and Aldermen of the municipality where the asset is located;

2° a non-profit association which has gathered the signatures of 150 people who are at least 18 years old and domiciled in the Region. The purpose of this association must be the preservation of heritage and its articles of association must have been published in the Belgian Official Gazette at least three years in advance;

3° the owner, when they have been refused an urban development permit or certificate for the sole reason that their property is protected or located in an exemption zone.' (Article 239 CoBAT/BWRO).

The same applies to an application for deletion from the preservation list (Article 220 CoBAT/BWRO).

In the event of an application for demolition, deletion from the list or lifting of protection, it is important that it can be shown that the heritage value on which the protection measure was originally based no longer exists. This may not be obvious, since the asset (sculpture, monument, statue, etc.) may retain a value for heritage (historical, sometimes artistic, even urban development or other) while the owner wishes to get rid of it for legitimate reasons, such as recognition of the colonial and therefore problematic nature of the heritage object in question. Heritage also involves the protection of darker elements of history, often with the aim of preserving the traces of a past from which a society wishes to distance itself (cf. the protection of the Dossin barracks in Mechelen or the recognition by UNESCO of the *Slave Route* project in 1994).

In this respect, it seems more straightforward to start an application for relocation (via an urban development permit) that relates not so much to the heritage value of the asset, but rather its visibility in the public space. The analysis of cultural rights is consistent with this observation, as further explained in Section 7.

6.4. The specific rules for street names[34]

The rules to be followed for changing street names are once again primarily procedural.

For municipal streets, the College of Mayor and Aldermen is only competent to determine the name of new streets, while the name change of existing streets is regulated within the Municipal Council.[35] For example, according to an ordinance of the City of Brussels,

[34] Thanks to Chantal Kesteloot, on whose presentation 'Colonisation, décolonisation. Quelle place dans l'odonymie bruxelloise?' of 21 April 2021 this section is mostly based.

[35] See, for example, the Municipal Ordinance on the Attributing of Addresses: https://www.bruxelles.be/sites/default/files/bxl/texte_nl.pdf. See also the circular of 23 February 2018 from the Minister of the Interior recognising this exclusive municipal competence for municipal roads: https://www.ibz.rrn.fgov.be/fileadmin/user_upload/nl/rr/omzendbrieven/BeSt_Address_Richtlijnen_20180223.pdf

local residents must also be consulted: '*The intention to change a name must be announced to all inhabitants, local residents of the street concerned; they must be informed that they have a period of 15 days to communicate any objections to the Municipal Council*.' (Article 4, § 2).

For regional roads, any change of name falls within the competence of the Brussels-Capital Region.

In addition to the municipal or regional competence, there is also the Royal Commission for Toponymy & Dialectology, which was set up in 1926 and has been consulted since 1972 for the modification of street names, giving its opinion within one month of the submission of the application[36]. If an existing name is changed, the choice of the new name must be justified to the Commission for Toponymy.

On its website[37], the Royal Commission lists the reasons for a possible change in street names and the aspects that should be taken into account where applicable. The following is written about personal names:

> *'General comment regarding personal names. - When it comes to persons who died more than fifty years ago, normally no objection can be formulated.*
>
> *Names of persons still living will not be accepted, except those of heads of state. For members of the Royal family, permission must be sought from the King through the Minister of the Interior.*
>
> *When it concerns persons who died less than fifty years ago, consideration should be given to whether their names actually merit being remembered, within fifty years and beyond, for the benefit of future generations, because their work or role was particularly noteworthy. It is, of course, difficult to make a definite judgment for each case, but apparently the following must be done at least:*
>
> *1° limit the use of names of political personalities (the only source for many municipalities);*
>
> *2° limit the proportion of personal names (6 out of 6 new names is excessive, for example);*
>
> *3° exclude names chosen according to events belonging to the private sphere (such as a centenarian);*
>
> *4° avoid names that are difficult to write and pronounce, especially foreign names whose written language differs from French or Dutch[38]: Lloyd, Allende. This also applies to generic names, such as the name of an English regiment;*
>
> *5° avoid names that could lead to ambiguity or ridicule. This can also be applied to determinants other than personal names'.*

[36] Circular letter from the Minister of the Interior dated 7 December 1972 addressed to the provincial governors and mayors, *BOG*, 23 December 1972. See also Article 5, § 7 of the Municipal Ordinance on the Attributing of Addresses.

[37] https://www.toponymie-dialectologie.be/fr/denomination-voies-publiques/

[38] The original text refers only to French.

For remark No. 4 – the difficulty of pronouncing or writing names – , the intention seems understandable, but it should in no way lead to the overly hasty exclusion of certain names. Incidentally, this criterion is not included in the Ministerial Circular of 2018, Article 8.[39]

As N. Ouali *et al.* note (free translation):

> *'Schematically, the formal procedure for the naming of roads by municipalities consists of the following steps (which are therefore not all observed or carried out in that order): name proposal on the initiative of the elected officials, municipal departments or citizens; approval by the college and by the municipal council; approval by the CRTD/KCTD; vote by the municipal council; inclusion of the name in the national register; dissemination of the information; implementation and placement of signs on public roads; possible registration with Google Maps.'*[40]

The question of changing street names could be extended to the names of public buildings (hospitals, school institutions, etc.), although to our knowledge there does not appear to be a specific procedure for this. This can apparently be decided by the public owner of the institution in question.

6.5. The modification of colonial symbols and criminal law

Within the range of legal questions that public authorities may ask about colonial symbols in the public space, one aspect relates to the possible consequences of interventions that alter these colonial symbols, such as the application of graffiti or other painted marks (A) or their demolition or damage (B). These changes may fall under criminal law, which provides for specific violations to this end in the Penal Code[41]. It is therefore important to define the scope of these criminal violations, as a complement to the existing legal framework, even if these interventions, whether or not carried out with the approval of the public authorities - as with the application for treatment of colonial symbols referred to in this report - are in principle outside the scope of criminal law.

[39] See also the circular of 23 February 2018 from the Minister of the Interior recognising this exclusive municipal competence for municipal roads: https://www.ibz.rrn.fgov.be/fileadmin/user_upload/nl/rr/omzendbrieven/BeSt_Address_Richtlijnen_20180223.pdf

[40] Ouali et al, 'Vrouwen in Brusselse straatnamen. Topografie van een minorisering', Brussels Studies. La revue scientifique pour les recherches sur Bruxelles/Het wetenschappelijk tijdschrift voor onderzoek over Brussel/The Journal of Research on Brussels, March 2021, available at https://journals.openedition.org/brussels/5431 (accessed 29 October 2021)

[41] Cf. H.-D. Bosly and C. De Valkeneer, '§ 8. - Graffiti et dégradation des propriétés immobilières (C. pén., art. 534bis à 534quater)' in *Les infractions – Volume 1*, 2nd edition, Brussels, Larcier, 2016, pp. 863-874.

A. Applying paint, graffiti or tags to colonial symbols as a criminal act of vandalism

One of the strategies to decolonise the public space is to apply visible marks on the colonial symbols, such as red paint or other graffiti or tags. However, can these marks applied to a statue, a monument or other existing property be prosecuted as ‘graffiti’ or the 'intentional defacement of a property' within the meaning of the Penal Code, and can they therefore be considered vandalism?

The Law of 25 January 2007 punishing graffiti and damage to immovable property, and amending the new Municipal Law[42], inserted Articles 534*bis* and 534*ter* in the Penal Code, as follows:

> *‘Section IVbis. - Graffiti and damage to immovable property.*
>
> *Article 534bis. § 1. Anyone who, without permission, applies graffiti to movable or immovable property shall be punished with imprisonment of between 1 month and 6 months and with a fine of between €26 and €200 or with one of these punishments alone.*
>
> *§ 2. The maximum term of imprisonment shall be increased to 1 year in the event of recurrence of a crime referred to in the first paragraph within five years from the date of pronouncement of a previous conviction that has the force of res iudicata.*
>
> *Article 534ter. Anyone who intentionally damages another person's immovable property shall be punished with imprisonment of between 1 month and 6 months and with a fine of between €26 and €200 or with one of these punishments alone.’*

Although the distinction between article 534*bis* – the punishment for the unauthorised application of graffiti – and article 534ter – the punishment for any damage to an immovable property – is not always clear at first glance[43], the former punishes graffiti applied to both immovable and movable property (paint, statue not incorporated in the ground, etc.)[44]. Moreover, the author of a graffito can be prosecuted as soon as the graffito has been applied without permission, without any damage to the property, unlike the infringement under Article 534ter. However, a moral element is required in order for the above-mentioned misdemeanour to be prosecuted: the author of the graffito must have intended to apply their graffito knowing that they did not have permission to do so.

Incidentally, the term graffiti is not defined by the Penal Code. The new Belgian Penal Code (in draft) does define **vandalism** as (freely translated by *) ‘***Vandalism is any conduct knowingly and intentionally committed on any property belonging to***

[42] *BOG.*, 20 February 2007.

[43] B. Van Besien, ‘Hoofdstuk 13. Provenance: over diefstal en vervalsingsproblematiek’, *in* O. Lenaerts (ed.), *Handboek kunstrecht*, Antwerp, Intersentia, 2021, p. 365-383., p. 375. See also H.-D. Bosly, and C. De Valkeneer, '§ 8. - Graffiti et dégradation des propriétés immobilières (C. pén., art. 534bis à 534quater)', *op. cit.*, p. 868-869, who believe that this distinction is difficult to understand.

[44] In this regard, it is interesting to note that the penalties provided for in Article 534*bis* are more severe than the more general penalties for any damage to a movable asset under Article 559, para. 1 of the Penal Code.

another person which consists of destroying, damaging, rendering unusable or applying graffiti without permission.'

Nevertheless, despite the lack of a clear definition, the legislator intended to punish graffiti or damage made for racist or discriminatory motives more severely (in article 534*quater*, introduced by the law of 10 May 2007[45]):

> *'Article 534quater. In the cases provided for in Articles 534bis and 534ter, the minimum of the penalties provided for in these Articles may be doubled in the case of criminal penalties and increased by two years in the case of imprisonment, when one of the motives of the offence consists in hatred of, disdain for or hostility to a person on account of their alleged race, skin colour, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, birth, age, fortune, religion or convictions, present or future state of health, disability, language, political beliefs, physical or genetic characteristic or social background.'*

Moreover, in addition to criminal penalties, **administrative fines** may be imposed under Article 119*bis* of the New Municipal Law, which refers to the commented provisions of the Penal Code (534*bis* and *ter*). These fines rise to €350 (adult offender) or €175 (minor offender); the College of Mayor and Aldermen can conclude a protocol with the prosecutor for the prosecution of these combined offences[46].

To return to the original question, it seems quite possible that actions carried out against colonial symbols can be prosecuted on the basis of the commented articles on vandalism in the Penal Code. But even if the material element has become visible (applying a graffito and/or damaging an immovable asset), the moral element must still be considered.

In this respect, we must refer to a recent decision of the Police Court of Brussels, dated 25 February 2020 (City of Brussels vs. K. Retsin, unpublished), which states (freely translated by *): '*Applying a text to a work of art is not sufficient to indicate an intention to damage [...] there can only be a suggestion of graffiti if there is a permanent character to the applied text*.' Marks applied to certain colonial symbols using washable paint and without a permanent character, would therefore not fall within the scope of the Penal Code....

In addition, it is clear that **when the application of graffito is permitted, the act is not punishable**[47]. It is up to the owner of the assets or the person using the assets (with the agreement of the owner) to give such consent, in writing, to avoid any dispute[48], even if the implied consent appears to be accepted in case law. However, it should be mentioned that, as Bosly and De Valkeneer point out, the consent of the municipality is not enough. They regret the fact that it is **only from the owner that such permission can be given, and not by the municipal authorities collectively (free translation)**: '*It*

[45] Law of 10 May 2007 to combat certain forms of discrimination, *BOG*, 30 May 2007.
[46] B. Van Besien, 'Hoofdstuk 13. Provenance: over diefstal en vervalsingsproblematiek', *op. cit.*, p. 376.
[47] *Gedr. St.* Chamber, G.Z. 2005-2006, no. 51-2654/001, p. 7, see also H.-D. Bosly, and C. De Valkeneer, '§ 8. - Graffiti et dégradation des propriétés immobilières (C. pén., art. 534bis à 534quater)', *op. cit.*, p. 865.
[48] *Gedr. St.* Chamber, G.Z. 2005-2006, no. 51-2654/001, p. 8, see also H.-D. Bosly, and C. De Valkeneer, '§ 8. - Graffiti et dégradation des propriétés immobilières (C. pén., art. 534bis à 534quater)', op. cit., p. 865.

may seem strange in that respect that private permission, even if theoretical, can potentially cross municipal policy on the matter. In our opinion, they should have explicitly required dual permission: permission from the municipal authorities and from the owner of the asset in question.'[49]

B. The destruction of or damage to monuments and works of art

From the entry into force of the Penal Code in 1867, damaging and destroying monuments, statues or other works of art in public spaces or in places of worship or memorials was considered a misdemeanour (which, incidentally is worse than vandalism as discussed in section A above):

> *'*Section III. *- Destruction or damage to graves, monuments, works of art, titles, records or other papers.*
>
> Article 526*. Anyone who destroys, pulls down, mutilates or damages the following shall be punished with imprisonment of between 8 days and 1 year, and with a fine of between 26 [euros] to 500 [euros]:*
>
> *Gravestones, memorials or headstones;*
>
> *Monuments, statues or other objects intended for public benefit or public decoration and erected by the competent government or with its authorisation;*
>
> *Monuments, statues, paintings, or any works of art displayed in churches, temples, or other public buildings.'*

The following are therefore included in a broad sense, both useful and decorative objects such as monuments, statues or works of art (paintings or other decorative objects), and memorials such as gravestones, tombstones or other signs related to graves.[50]

This extensive scope also includes street signs, as confirmed by the Court of Cassation in a ruling from 8 March 1938 regarding French-sounding street names painted over by Flemish nationalists in the 1930s given their alleged non-compliance with language laws.[51] The Court ruled that such actions fall within the scope of Article 526, para. 3 of the Penal Code and that citizens in no case have an individual right to enforce language laws.[52]

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[49] *Ibid.*, p. 866.

[50] *Gedr. St.* Chamber, G.Z. 2005-2006, no. 51-2654/001, p. 8, see also H.-D. Bosly, and C. De Valkeneer, '§ 8. - Graffiti et dégradation des propriétés immobilières (C. pén., art. 534bis à 534quater)', *op. cit.*, p. 865. These authors regret the fact that it is only via ownership that such permission can be given, and not by the municipal authorities collectively (free translation): 'It may seem strange in that respect that private permission, even if theoretical, can potentially cross municipal policy on the matter. In our opinion, they should have explicitly required dual permission: permission from the municipal authorities and from the owner of the asset in question.' (p. 866)

[51] Cass., 8 March 1938, *Pas.*, 1938, p. 41-42. See also Brussels, 18 June 1975, *Pas.*, 1976, II, p. 74.

[52] 'The act of destroying or damaging street name signs installed by the municipal government, which is authorised to do so, is punishable under Article 526 of the Penal Code. Citizens do not have an individual right to respect the provisions of the law of 28 June 1932 on the use of languages in administrative matters; the disregard of the regulations of this law by the Administration cannot give rise to a dispute before the judiciary', Cass., 8 March 1938, *Pas.*, 1938, p. 41-42.

These objects may be located in a public building (including a church or temple) or in a place intended for public use (in other words, the public space).

These notions of public building or art object, while not defined, imply, as regards the public building, that there is a public purpose for these immovable assets, even if they are erected by private persons (with the consent of the competent authority).[53]

Most of these colonial symbols likely fall under paragraph 3 of Article 526, in other words under the ***'monuments, statues or other objects intended for public benefit or public decoration and erected by the competent government or with its authorisation'***.

All acts of destruction, pulling down, mutilation or damage are punished fairly broadly. Among these could therefore also be included, painting (for example, smearing a statue with red paint), as well as setting fire to one of these assets (Article 510 Penal Code).

For example, in a judgement dated 19 October 2012, the Correctional Court of Brussels stated (free translation), '*Applying a large tag to a courthouse can be equated with the destruction of a public building, punishable by Article 526 of the Penal Code. This act may be punished with imprisonment of up to one year and may therefore justify the issuing of an arrest warrant.'* [54]

The moral element of the offence exists *'only in the will to commit the act punished by the criminal law.'* [55] In other words, '*it is enough that the perpetrator realised that they had damaged or destroyed an object intended for public ornamentation or for public utility',* regardless of whether by doing so they intended to express their political or sporting opinion[56] about an event.

When these statues, monuments, works of art, or street signs are defaced in this way, it falls to their material owner – usually a public authority, even if there are cases of private colonial symbols in public spaces (see Section 1) – to seek compensation for the damage incurred by filing a revocation along with the criminal action.

Again, there is no infringement in the event of the owner's consent, given the absence of moral element, which might be the case in the hypothesis of colonial symbols being changed by or with the consent of the public authorities - but the owner's consent must also be obtained if these are not the same persons (public authorities and owner).

[53] Cass., 16 October 1973, ruling no. F-19731016-10 (free translation): 'Article 526, paragraph 4, of the Penal Code punishes anyone who destroys, pulls down, mutilates or damages: monuments, statues, paintings or any works of art placed in churches, temples or other public buildings, even if they belong to private persons.'; H.-D. Bosly, and C. De Valkeneer, '§ 3. - Destructions ou dégradations de tombeaux, monuments et objets d'art (C. pén., art. 526)', *op. cit.*, p. 830-831.

[54] Corr. (Council chamber), Brussels, 19 October 2012, *J.L.M.B.*, 2013, p. 148. However, this analysis is not followed by everyone, excluding the application of Article 526 in case of tags a preference for the application of 534*bis*, possibly with Article 453 of the Penal Code, see H.-D. Bosly, and C. De Valkeneer, '§ 8. - Graffiti et dégradation des propriétés immobilières (C. pén., art. 534bis à 534quater)', *op. cit.*, p. 866 and 833-834.

[55] H.-D. Bosly, and C. De Valkeneer, '§ 3. - Destructions ou dégradations de tombeaux, monuments et objets d'art (C. pén., art. 526)', *op. cit*., p. 834.

[56] Cass., 22 July 1974, *Pas.*, 1974, I, p. 1135-1137.

6.6 Do actions against colonial symbols violate the moral rights of the author of these works?

Some colonial symbols can be protected by copyright, provided that this symbol is considered an original work of art and provided that it is still within 70 years after the death of the author. Lawyer Bart Van Besien rightly notes that some statues with a colonial character, particularly those of Leopold II, were erected in the 1950s or later and thus still fall under copyright protection[57]. It is therefore important **to determine for each disputed work whether it is still the subject of protection as the intellectual property of the sculptor who produced it**.

For example, the memorial *Congo Monument* in Parc du Cinquantenaire by Thomas Vinçotte (died 1925) and the sculpture *Runaway black slaves are attacked by dogs* by Louis Samain (died 1901) are no longer protected by copyright. Conversely, the **statue of Emile Storms on Square de Meeûs, a work by Marnix D'Haveloose (died 1973), remains protected by copyright until 2043**. Similarly, the sculpture *Monument to the Colonial Pioneers of the Municipality of Ixelles* on Place de la Croix-Rouge by Marcel Rau (who died in 1966) is still protected by copyright until 2036.

The actions taken against these colonial symbols (interpretative plaques added, defacement or other markings on the statue, removal or destruction, or even the installation of contemporary artworks), may indeed infringe on the moral rights of the author, in which case the author or their heirs may bring an **action for damages for violation of the moral rights relating to the integrity of and respect for the work of art**, based on Article XI.165, 2, paragraph 6 of the Code of Economic Law.

Nevertheless, the moral right to the integrity of their work is not absolute, even though it creates the possibility of resisting both material and non-material changes to the work (Cass. 8 May 2008). For example, while an artistic expression applied to a work protected by copyright falls under the fundamental freedom of expression (Article 19 of the Belgian Constitution and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights), this freedom can be limited by the intellectual property rights of the author of the original work. **Between these various fundamental rights (freedom of opinion versus property rights), a delicate balancing act will have to be made on a case-by-case basis.**

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled in a Turkish case that pouring paint over a public statue can be an act covered by freedom of expression.[58] In this case, Murat Vural had been sentenced to the harsh penalty of 13 years imprisonment with deprivation of his civil rights, for smearing five statues of Atatürk with paint, which were displayed in public places. Incidentally, the Turkish court did not convict Mr. Murat Vural of vandalism or damage, but rather of insulting the memory of the founder of the Turkish Republic,

[57] Nevertheless, the author notes that the statue of Leopold II at Place du Trône, produced by Thomas Vinçotte, is no longer protected by copyright. B. Van Besien, 'Hoofdstuk 13. Provenance: over diefstal en vervalsingsproblematiek', *op. cit.*, p. 379.
[58] European Court of Human Rights, judgement of 21 October 2014, Murat Vural vs. Turkey.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. However, the European Court ruled that such a violation of freedom of expression was completely disproportionate.

As such, affixing a plaque to works with a colonial character does not necessarily constitute a violation of the moral rights of the author of the work, as it does not automatically impair the spirit of the work. According to Bart Van Besien, this must be balanced with the freedom of expression of another part of the public. The same applies to relocating the work, where the rights of the material owner (those of the statue or of the monument as such) may take precedence over the rights of the intellectual owner (those of the creator of the spirit of the original work).[59] However, the punishment for such acts of defamation – given that smearing paint can be an act of defamation, even if that act is also protected by freedom of expression – is still possible, provided that it is proportionate, which generally seems to be the case in Belgian criminal law (8 days to one year imprisonment or a fine of between €26 and €500).

A crucial aspect is to analyse the proportionality of each measure, tailoring the response to each specific case, with respect for all the rights and interests involved (see diagram in Section 8).

[59] For a recent application, see the ruling of the Court of First Instance of Bruges of 30 December 2016: the artists opposed the relocation of their statues from a square to a park, but the judge found that the relocation did not violate their moral right and let the material property rights of the City of Bruges prevail over the intellectual property rights of the artists. The court also ruled that the authority regarding the decision to relocate is vested entirely with the material owner, B. Van Besien, 'Hoofdstuk 13. Provenance: over diefstal en vervalsingsproblematiek', *op. cit.*, p. 381.

6.7. Critical and reflexive considerations on the dissonant heritage and its treatment by the law

A. The law that protects colonial symbols as cultural heritage is politically stained

Cultural heritage is not only politically stained, it is also a ''legal construct', even an 'object of legal struggle, affirming the power of the state to decide the fate of things that are not its property.'[60] As such, regulation plays a dominant role in protecting cultural heritage. Through the legal measures taken by the competent public authorities, the latter can elaborate their policies on the heritage to be protected. They enjoy the sovereign power to do so, even for assets that are not their property. In other words, **the legislation drawn up by these public authorities establishes the framework within which heritage can be protected and thus stipulated, or, conversely, which heritage should not (or no longer) be protected**, as the case of colonial heritage and, more broadly, colonial symbols seems to illustrate.

FIG. 35. The bust of Leopold II in Parc Duden in Forest was 'stolen' and replaced with a replica made out of birdseeds. (Photo: Bruzz)

In Belgian law, the scope of what deserves protection has been expanded over the years by broadening the definitions (from 'monument' of the 19th/early 20th century to 'heritage' from 1970-80) and by addressing broader interests that warrant heritage protection. Yet this broader legal view of what is meant by heritage does not rule out that heritage is in practice exposed to certain risks: the risk of being (un)consciously forgotten, the risk of being neglected, or the risk of being destroyed. These **heritage risks, in turn, can obstruct, manipulate, or limit the individual and collective memory**. In the case of colonial heritage, the risk lies not so much in oblivion, neglect or destruction – which is also true of other categories of colonial heritage that are not highlighted or protected but that tell a different part of colonial history, for example the resistance to it – but rather in a glorification that shows only one version of the past and thus manipulates the collective memory. Indeed, in this context, cultural heritage could be used ideologically to legitimise the authority of the existing order or power. The

[60] M. Cornu and N. Wagener, 'L'objet patrimoine, Une construction juridique et politique?', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, January 2018, no. 1, p. 33.

colonial symbols in our streets therefore glorify a certain part of Belgium's colonial history, but mask another, that of the victims of this imperialism. This is because the (freely translated) *'appropriation of memory [...] is not exclusively the speciality of totalitarian regimes; it is the privilege of all glorious leaders.'*[61] For philosopher Paul Ricoeur, any work on the past involves a shifting and deliberate connection of events among themselves, which *'will necessarily be guided by the pursuit, not of truth, but of good.'*[62] Here one can easily make a link to the need to preserve the elements of heritage that are most representative of a given cultural interest, while remaining aware of the search for historical truth in this selection of elements. The question therefore arises to what extent the selection of elements to be protected is not the result of certain leanings of those who ensure that only what they consider to be cultural heritage or what responds to their own reading of history to be preserved or not to be preserved is protected.

Preserving heritage requires **the state to protect the cultural identities of its entire public for the benefit of the past, present and future**. But this state could draw up its heritage policies and regulations in a way that serves its own political, ideological or religious agenda and thus consciously or unconsciously erase certain pages of our history or overvalue others. This becomes especially problematic when cultural minorities have no voice in the process or when the multiple facets of a cultural identity - which has become much more complex and diverse than the national identity envisioned by 19th-century nation-states - are ignored. Indeed, heritage encompasses more than just traces of our past: through its utility value for society, it also expresses our present-day values. It is therefore important **to encourage an inclusive and participatory approach that starts from the fundamental right to cultural heritage**.

B. For an inclusive and participatory approach to the right to cultural heritage, including colonial symbols

This **right to cultural heritage has slowly made its way into the international and European sphere.**[63] First, through the recognition of cultural rights in Article 27 of the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, and then in Article 15 §1, a of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which also recognises the right of everyone to participate in cultural life.[64]

Although genuine *'rights to heritage*'[65] have long been absent from the sources of international human rights law, they have been able to germinate in the context of the recognition of cultural identities and the special context of **minorities and indigenous peoples** until recently a '*right to cultural heritage*' was finally established as a

[61] P. Ricoeur, *La Mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris, Seuil, 2000, p. 104.
[62] T. Todorov, *Les Abus de la mémoire*, Paris, Arléa, 1995, p. 50, quoted by P. Ricoeur, *ibid*., p. 105.
[63] See M.-S. de Clippele, 'La dimension collective du patrimoine culturel: la nature et les prérogatives des acteurs du collectif. Perspectives de droit belge', *Revue de Droit de l'Université de Sherbrooke*, 2021, vol. 49.
[64] See General Comment No. 21 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2009), E/C.12/GC/21
[65] Mylène Bidault, La protection internationale des droits culturels, Brussels, Bruylant, 2009.

fundamental right.[66] This fundamental right to heritage is a component of cultural rights, as part of the second generation of human rights.[67]

The right to cultural heritage was first explicitly recognised as part of human rights in the ICOMOS Stockholm Declaration of 11 September 1998[68], but it did not contain any binding measures.

It was only until the 2005 **Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage to Society** that the fundamental right to cultural heritage was enshrined. This so-called 'Faro Convention' helped the way we approach heritage protection evolve in numerous ways, especially with regard to the definition of heritage and the heritage community. Moreover, the Convention clearly sets out the right to cultural heritage: '*Everyone, alone or collectively, has the right to benefit from the cultural heritage and to contribute towards its enrichment*.'[69] This implies the responsibility of all to respect the cultural heritage of others, their own heritage and the common heritage of Europe.[70] This means anyone who exercises their right individually or collectively.

The influence of the question of human rights is clear.[71] It comes down to *'the need to put people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage'*.[72] There is no longer only reference to the right *of* cultural heritage, but also the right *to* cultural heritage, which is regarded as a '*right inherent in the right to participate in cultural life'* (Article 1). The functions of conservation are constantly changing and, in addition to preservation and protection, include digitisation and enhancing the value of heritage.

As such, through the international and European legal texts, the right of individuals (individual and collective) *to* cultural heritage was emerging[73]. This right gradually developed from the right to participate in cultural life (understood as access to the arts) and was subsequently broadened to include the right to the cultural life of minorities and indigenous peoples (linked to cultural identity and implying access to resources). When it was finally recognised as the right to cultural heritage (starting from intangible heritage), this right would be understood as the right of *access* to the heritage and to the benefits derived from it, including rights of collective use and enjoyment. In addition, other fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression, freedom of religion, the right to information and the right to education, also provide a legal basis for the right of individuals to cultural heritage[74].

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[66] Mylène Bidault, *La protection internationale des droits culturels*, *op. cit.*, p. 495-496; Cf. Lyndell V. Prott, 'Cultural rights as Peoples' rights in international law', *in* Judith Crawford, *The Rights of Peoples*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988, p. 103-106; Janet Blake, 'On defining the cultural heritage', *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 1, 2000, p. 77 et seq.

[67] Patrice Meyer-Bisch, "Analyse des droits culturels", *Droits fondamentaux*, no. 7, January 2008 – December 2009, p. 6.

[68] Drawn up to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

[69] Article 4. a, of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage to Society, done at Faro on 27 October 2005.

[70] Cultural heritage is defined here in a broad sense as 'a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time'. (Article 2).

[71] Marie Cornu, 'Culture et Europe', Fasc. 2400, no. 5, 2012, Paris, LexisNexis, 2012, p. 47.

[72] Introduction to the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society.

[73] See also Andrzej Jakubowski, *Cultural Rights as Collective Rights: An International Law Perspective*, Leiden, Brill/Nijhoff, 2016.

[74] Report of the Independent Expert in the field of Cultural Rights, Ms. Farida Shaheed, 17th session, March 21, 2011, A/HRC/17/38, p. 22.

The **right to cultural heritage** is furthermore enshrined in **Article 23, 4° of the Belgian Constitution,** which *guarantees 'the right to the protection of a healthy environment',* as well as in **article 23, 5**° of the Constitution, which guarantees *'the right to cultural and social enjoyment.'* This right implies obligations on the part of the State. They can be grouped into three categories: the obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the right to cultural heritage, as many components of that right.[75] No longer viewed from the standpoint of the obligations of the state but rather from the prerogatives granted to the beneficiaries of the right to cultural heritage, these prerogatives focus on the **concept of access**.

In her report in the field of cultural rights, independent expert Farida Shaheed inventories the different forms of access to cultural heritage.[76] In addition, the gradual nature of access also implies favouring certain modes of access over others, '*since the interests of individuals and groups depend on their relations to specific cultural patrimonia.'*[77] As such, the access of the local community to its cultural heritage and the access of the religious community to its worship space take precedence over access by the general public. Similarly, tourists or researchers are only allowed access to a particular monument if it does not harm the source community of that monument.

Focused on the concept of access, the right to cultural heritage therefore includes 'the right of individuals and communities to, inter alia, know, understand, enter, visit, make use of, maintain, exchange and develop cultural heritage, as well as to benefit from the cultural heritage and the creation of others.'[78] Moreover, access also has a political dimension, which brings it closer to the concept of cultural interest, since the right to cultural heritage also means '*the right to participate in the identification, interpretation and development of cultural heritage, as well as to the design and implementation of preservation/safeguard policies and programmes.'*[79]

But despite the introduction of this right, it has limited effectiveness, both in Belgian and in international and European law. This prompts some authors to reject the existence of such a general right to cultural heritage, as its confirmation (or rather, in our view, its enforceability) is still too limited[80]. As such, Lise Vandenhende refers to the recent judgment of the European Court of Human Rights which, in the *Ahunbay vs. Turkey* judgment, rejected the recognition of a '*universal individual right to the protection of cultural heritage*' on the pretext that there is '*no European consensus, nor even any trend among the member states of the Council of Europe*' in this sense; at most, there are '*rights linked to cultural heritage*' reserved '*for the specific status*' of minorities and indigenous peoples[81]. The court therefore seems to disregard the Faro Convention. Although not signed by Turkey, this convention has entered into force within the Council of Europe and, consequently, translates the actual trend of recognising such a right. At

[75] C. Romainville, *Le droit à la culture, une réalité juridique - Le régime juridique du droit de participer à la vie culturelle en droit constitutionnel et en droit international*, Brussels, Bruylant, 2014.
[76] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[77] *Ibid.*
[78] Report of the Independent Expert in the field of Cultural Rights, *op. cit.,* p. 21.
[79] *Ibid.*
[80] See The analysis of Lise Vandenhende in her doctoral dissertation (and the cited references), L. Vandenhende, *De beschermenswaardigheid van onroerend erfgoed: naar sterkere bindende criteria*, Ghent, University of Ghent, 6 July 2020., p. 76-102.
[81] European Court of Human Rights., *Ahunbay and Others v. Turkey* judgment of 29 January 2019, § 25 and §§ 23-24. For a commentary on this judgment, see L. Vandenhende, 'Een evolutieve interpretatie van het EVRM: Is de lans voor het recht op cultureel erfgoed gebroken?', *T.R.O.S.*, 2019, no. 94, pp. 161-173.

the same time, it seems difficult to infer from the European Convention of Human Rights a fundamental right to the protection of heritage; the claimants had based this on Article 8 of the Convention (protection of private life) and not on Article 10 (freedom of access).

In addition to its limited enforceability, the right to participate in cultural life, from which the right to cultural heritage derives, is subject to certain limitations set forth by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights set out in General Comment No. 21 regarding Article 15 § 1, a of the ICESCR:

> *'The Committee wishes to recall that, while account must be taken of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic or cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms. Thus* ***no one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law****, nor to limit their scope*
>
> *19. Applying limitations to the right of everyone to take part in cultural life may be necessary in certain circumstances, in particular in the case of* ***negative practices, including those attributed to customs and traditions, that infringe upon other human rights. Such limitations must pursue a legitimate aim, be compatible with the nature of this right and be strictly necessary for the promotion of general welfare in a democratic society****, in accordance with article 4 of the Covenant. Any limitations must therefore be proportionate, meaning that the least restrictive measures must be taken when several types of limitations may be imposed. The Committee also wishes to stress the need to take into consideration existing international human rights standards on limitations that can or cannot be legitimately imposed on rights that are intrinsically linked to the right to take part in cultural life, such as the rights to privacy, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, to freedom of opinion and expression, to peaceful assembly and to freedom of association.*
>
> *20. Article 15, paragraph 1 (a) may not be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms recognized in the Covenant or at their limitation to a greater extent than is provided for therein.'*

In the same vein, the UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, Karima Bennoune, recognises that '*cultural rights include the right to cultural syncretism*,' according to which cultures evolve and mix. In her report on the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage, she states:

> *'Much of what we consider heritage is the result of continuous recreation throughout history, with each layer adding to its meaning and value. As stressed many times by the former Special Rapporteur, the mandate on cultural rights has been established to protect not culture and cultural heritage per se, but rather the conditions allowing all people, without discrimination, to access, participate in and contribute to cultural life through a process of continuous development. These conditions are greatly jeopardized when cultural heritage is at risk or destroyed. Therefore,* ***prima facie, destruction of cultural heritage must be considered a violation of cultural rights****.* ***However, there may be***

cases where monuments celebrate the memory of past human rights violations, or promote ideas, concepts or actions that are no longer acceptable, such as violence and discrimination *(A/HRC/25/49). The fate of such monuments should be* ***addressed within the human rights framework****, in particular within the context of the standards pertaining to limitations on cultural rights (general comment No. 21 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, para. 19; A/HRC/14/36, para. 35). To these conditions* ***should be added the imperative to conduct in-depth consultation, including on the diversity of interpretations of the heritage, alternatives to its destruction and the means of memorialising it****.'*

In other words, if a colonial symbol is considered part of the cultural heritage, then it must be ensured that a restriction on the right of individuals to their cultural heritage (a restriction that would be caused by the destruction or relocation of this symbol) is proportionate*, 'meaning that the least restrictive measures must be taken when several types of limitations may be imposed'* (cited above, General Comment No. 21, § 19). If the legitimacy of this restriction is self-evident in the case of colonial heritage, insofar as this monument glorifies acts of violence and discrimination, it would still have to be shown which measure is the least restrictive for cultural heritage, in order to respect the totality of cultural rights.

The general comments on cultural rights suggest that it would be appropriate to conduct a case-by-case evaluation that would, after thorough consultation, examine the various solutions for the treatment of colonial symbols (particularly those of a heritage nature), ensuring that the solution of destruction remains the last resort.

But when it comes to a monument of a former oppressive regime, such as colonisation, the UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, Farida Shaheed, states in her report that:

'62 – The question is how to manage an architectural legacy with strong symbolic connotations when oppressive regimes collapse. Should a new democratic Government destroy, conserve or transform these legacies? Answers vary from situation to situation, frequently giving rise to intense controversy, including amongst victims Striking examples include debates in Spain over the memorial in Valle de los caidos (the Valley of the Fallen) where Franco is buried, in Bulgaria over the mausoleum of former communist leader Georgy Dimitrov, which was finally destroyed, and in Germany over Hitler's bunker, now located beneath a parking lot in the centre of Berlin, marked only by a small sign

63 – The choice to conserve, transform or destroy always carries meaning and so needs to be discussed, framed and interpreted. For example, the destruction and transformation of such monuments may be interpreted as a willingness to erase one part of history or a specific narrative'. [82]

[82] Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, Farida Shaheed, *Memorialization processes*, A/HRC/25.49 (2014), §§ 62-63.

6.8. Concluding considerations - Legal system

At the end of this legal journey through the set of rules related more or less to colonial symbols in the public space, one cannot help but note the diverse nature of these rules.

To guide the recommendations made in the last chapter, this concluding section summarizes the applicable rules into a scheme that encompasses the various legal questions one will need to ask when dealing with a colonial symbol.

For the remainder, it seems appropriate to develop a public policy framework to guide how this contested heritage should be treated, without therefore introducing a new legal framework that could be too restrictive for all the relevant cases of colonial symbols.

At the same time, such a framework, which has the advantage of being flexible, should somehow be legally binding to avoid depending solely on 'good' political will. This framework should also insist on a participatory and inclusive approach focused on the fundamental right of individuals to participate in cultural life and consequently in cultural heritage, to better recognise the ethical value of heritage.

I. LEGAL QUESTIONS SURROUNDING COLONIAL SYMBOLS

1) Colonial Symbol? define the colonial character of the asset
   a) Immovable asset 'with a colonial character'
   b) Movable asset 'with a colonial character'

2) In the public space? specify whether the asset is located in the space in a narrow or broad sense
   a) public domain
   b) private space accessible to the public
   c) private asset located in the public space
   d) private or public asset visible from the public space

3) Who is the owner? measures should take more account of owner's rights if privately owned
   a) Public property
   b) Private property

4) Will the asset be protected as cultural heritage?
   a) Protected asset
   b) Asset registered in the preservation list
   c) Asset registered in the inventory
   d) Asset located in an exemption zone

5) Asset protected by copyright?
   a) Work = 'Original creation of the mind'

b) Within the period of 70 years after the creator's death
c) Public domain

II. LEGAL QUESTIONS SURROUNDING THE ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST COLONIAL SYMBOLS

Possible actions:

- Installing an information board
- Marking the existing colonial symbol with paint, graffiti, etc. Setting up a contemporary work of art
- Relocating the colonial symbol
- Demolishing and/or recycling the colonial symbol
- …

1) Urban development permit for each action?

a) Interventions and works exempt from urban development permit

Recommendation: Consider the advisability of introducing an exemption in the Ordinance of the Brussels-Capital Region of 13 November 2008 laying down the interventions and works that are exempt from an urban development permit, from the opinion of the authorised official, from the municipality, from the Royal Commission on Monuments and Sites, from the Consultation Committee as well as from the special rules on disclosure or the collaboration of an architect (called the Ordinance on 'works with limited scope')? The scope of such an exemption should be well delineated (with respect to certain themes conveyed by these colonial symbols) - ensuring that a dialogue with the public takes place, despite the exemption from public scrutiny resulting from the exemption from a permit

b) Interventions and works which require an urban development permit

i. Any advice (college of mayor and aldermen, CRMS/KCML, etc.)

2) Acts of marking that are considered vandalism?

Recommendation: Link to a mandatory (participatory) procedure to avoid the moral element of the offence of vandalism (Article 534*bis* and *ter*), or more simply, have the owner's consent

3) Acts of marking or demolition as criminal offences?

Recommendation: Link with a compulsory (participatory) procedure to avoid the moral element of the offence stipulated in Article 526 of the Penal Code, a

nd in any case ensure the owner's agreement

4) Infringement of the right to integrity of a work considered a colonial symbol for any action?

Recommendation: Analyse case by case to weigh the rights of the artist against the rights of the owner and those of society in general; engage in dialogue with the author or their heirs

CHAPTER 7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECOLONISING PUBLIC SPACE IN THE BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION

Decolonising public space in the Brussels-Capital Region must be part of a broader policy of decolonisation that is not limited to Belgium's colonial past: it is necessary to build an inclusive Brussels-Capital Region, in which every Brussels citizen recognises him/herself and feels recognised. Given the mandate of the Working Group, its priority recommendations, general and specific, are limited to traces related to the Belgian colonial past in the public space: in the first place public traces, and to a lesser extent private traces.

Moreover, the Working Group emphasises that decolonising public space must be part of a global policy that recognises the impact and consequences of colonisation on persons of Sub-Saharan African descent. It is therefore crucial to develop corresponding policies for other areas, including some that fall under the jurisdiction of the Brussels-Capital Region, such as health, housing, research, urbanisation and employment.

Not all of the proposed policies surrounding these colonial traces in Brussels fall under the jurisdiction of the Brussels-Capital Region or the municipalities that it encompasses. Some, for example, fall under the powers of the Belgian State. Historically, some traces were also closely linked to colonial traces outside the Region, such as the (federal) Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, which is located in Flanders, and the Meise Botanic Garden (Agentschap Plantentuin Meise), which is managed by the Flemish government.[83] In the European Parliament's House of European History, the role and importance of overseas European colonisation are somewhat neglected, but the institution may be a relevant place in Brussels to develop this narrative.

Given its function as the capital of Belgium and Europe, it is important for the Brussels-Capital Region to consult with the federal government, Flanders, the French Community of Brussels-Wallonia (CFWB) and the European Union so that specific, problematic interventions and new (national) memorials can be created 'in the name of the whole country' and hopefully serve as an example for other countries of the European Union.

7.1. General policies for an active and continuous decolonisation policy of public space

7.1.1. Recognition of colonial and postcolonial heritage

An active and continuous decolonisation policy of public space relies on the recognition of colonial and postcolonial heritage that is not limited to explicit and intentional colonial memorials, but also pays attention to less visible and legible colonial traces and of the history of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Brussels and by extension of persons of Sub-Saharan African descent identified as being black as a result of the

[83]The Meise Botanic Garden employs both employees of the Flemish Government and the French Community, cf. https://www.plantentuinmeise.be/fr/pO5eCw/over-ons.

history of the transatlantic slave trade and the European colonisation of large parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

While much colonial heritage is already recognised based on other criteria, this is not the case for heritage linked to the historical presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Belgium. That heritage is fragile. Previous attempts to save the building at 220 Rue Belliard, which housed the *Centre International* and *Présence Africaine* failed because the historical importance of the building was not recognised. The designation of Matonge as a 'sub-neighbourhood' of the Porte de Namur on the municipality of Ixelles' website and the existence of the Matonge bus stop are nothing more than hollow gestures if there is no active policy to preserve the African character of the neighbourhood, which is under pressure. Buildings and sites that are important from a historical perspective for people of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent in Belgium should be able to qualify for protection, regardless of their architectural value.

This particular heritage needs specific policies and constant further research. However, enough research has already been done to be able to work on decolonial policies regarding public spaces and colonial traces and to update heritage and tourism communications. Events such as the Festival of Architecture and Heritage Days, the Year of Art Nouveau (called Congo style in the context of the colonial exhibition in Tervuren in 1897) in 2023, etc. should critically examine the colonial origin/implication of certain buildings, through their function, financing, materials and typology, and systematically pay attention to heritage related to the history of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Brussels, with special attention to female heritage. This will allow the general public to learn about colonial and postcolonial heritage through existing channels.

FIG. 36. Sammy Baloji*, Hobé's Art Nouveau Forest and Its Lines of Color*, 2021. Baloji thematizes colonial dimensions of Belgian Art. (Photo: Martin Argyroglo, with the autorization of the artist)

However, there is still a lot of further research to be conducted by a whole range of individuals and organisations: academic historians and amateur historians with expertise on colonial history and/or the history of the presence of persons from the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda and their descendants in Belgium, on urban history, and on colonial memory culture and propaganda; anthropologists, architects and architectural historians; local history circles; lawyers, artists and art scholars, sociologists, urban planners; Sub-Saharan activists and associations; associations working on decolonising public space, and different types of institutions (companies, cultural institutions, financial institutions, mission congregations...) that hold archives, collections, etc.

Oral history is an important aspect of this research, especially as regards the history of the presence of Congolese, Burundians and Rwandans in Brussels. A campaign is needed to raise public awareness about the importance of heritage linked to the presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians in Brussels; an interactive app, such as *Ethnoally* (co-developed by Prof. Dr. Paolo Favero of the University of Antwerp), which allows visitors to the public space to add information themselves, could also be considered.

The Working Group also calls attention to heritage related to the role Brussels played in the transatlantic slave trade and requests that this subject and its decolonial treatment become priority (research) topics for Innoviris and for grants to heritage associations. Umbrella research projects on these topics could also be encouraged through Innoviris and BELSPO.

7.1.2. Constant social dialogue on colonial and postcolonial traces

The focus should not only be on change in physical space (problematising presences, pointing out absences), but also on collective mental space. The movement must be participatory and, above all, inclusive to ensure that as many residents as possible feel at home in Brussels.

As for contested colonial memorials, social dialogue begins from the moment they are physically and thus visibly contested. Afterwards, these memorials must be provided with a temporary explanatory sign that contains information about what is depicted, the materials used, the problematic nature of the representation and iconography (cf. *Chapter 5*), as well as the dates of information meetings that will be planned to formally organise the social dialogue.

Indeed, in case of (physical) contestation, a dialogue on a case-by-case basis needs to be organised. We invite local authorities to develop a participatory process involving residents, individuals and associations concerned with decoloniality and other (extra)local actors. The debates should be framed by information sessions and should contribute to improved knowledge of colonial and postcolonial history.

The intention is not to erase history (cf. C*hapter 1*), but to also tell it from the perspective of the oppressed which is currently completely missing. To transcend the exclusive perspective of the conquerors and create a public space around new values of equality and resilience, it is necessary to recognise colonisation as a common, shared past, the source of a new way of co-existing. This civil dialogue should be limited in time and

should lead to a concrete choice that does not create an absence (and therefore a taboo), but a counter-story.

We do not recommend an approach based on a popular vote. As recent cases at home and abroad have shown, residents either choose a neutral name to avoid any possible controversy in the future (such as *Park View House* as the new name of the former *Cecil Rhodes House* in London (Gentleman 2021)) or a name that again reveals resistances or blind spots (such as the Annie Cordy tunnel that refers to Brussels' popular culture but ignores the colonial elements in the singer's oeuvre). Moreover, from a decolonial perspective, it is necessary to replace references to white colonisers with references to (former) colonial subjects. Hence the importance of memory education (cf. *§7.1*.4.).

If a decision is made to remove a statue, bust, monument, plaque, street name, etc., this should not be done without ceremony and without leaving a trace of the debate. The authorities must distribute an explanatory text announcing the date of removal and any future location of the colonial memorial. The removal of statues, busts, monuments, plaques, etc. and the renaming of street names should be marked in a ceremonial manner, in the presence of the actors and organisations involved in the preceding process.

The public should also be kept informed of the replacement (ideally) of the memorial in question (cf. *Chapter 5* and *infra*).

In the case of intentional colonial memorials, the concept of ~~vandalism~~ must be nuanced, both in their management and in judicial proceedings. The Working Group does not want to give carte blanche to all those who want to destroy or vandalise objects in public space, but recognises that the physical traces of protest of certain colonial monuments, statues and street names are not pure destructive ~~vandalism~~. They are targeted actions that send the signal to decolonise society and revise the monumental representations from the colonial regime: such interventions open a debate or bring to light a historical truth.

Although regularly erased, artivist interventions on colonial statues have played their role as witnesses and catalysts of history. Such physical protest of colonial memorials should be a signal for the responsible authorities to initiate a dialogue with citizens about the monument in question as soon as possible. Placing a sign with explanatory text is preferable to immediate restoration.

The responsibility for problematising these monuments should not be left to the public alone. We urge the establishment of local processes that allow space and time for citizen dialogue as a fundamental step before any final intervention. In a first phase, the dialogue can take the form of temporary participatory works, on the colonial memorial or in its surroundings. These interventions can express debates in the short term. In a second phase, a counter-discourse must be developed through co-creation and externalised in a new creation on the site of the contested colonial memorial. The effort here is to provide a local answer to the following questions: who, what event, and what values do we want to celebrate and commemorate in our public spaces?

It should be taken into account that even after the development of a regional decolonisation policy, physical colonial traces in the public space run the risk of being ~~vandalised~~ anyway. This is why we advocate not prosecuting such interventions and

advocate a monument management process that leaves room for traces of decolonial protest: graffiti, paintings, temporary interventions, plaques on which people can express their opinions, etc.

If ~~vandalised~~ statues, monuments and street names are restored over time, the ~~vandalism~~ should be documented through photographs or image recordings.

Recently, the ~~vandalised~~ statue of General Storms was cleaned again. Since neither the commune of Ixelles nor the Brussels-Capital Region are responsible for this, one may assume that it was an (anonymous) citizens' initiative, similar to a group of monarchists systematically cleaning/restoring the daubed bust of Leopold II in the park of the Royal Museum for Central Africa. The Working Group recommends that Urban Brussels clearly communicate that restoration must be done professionally and that restoration attempts by amateurs could cause even more damage.

7.1.3. Legal Recommendations.

Consideration should be given to the desirability of an exemption to be inserted in the Brussels Capital Government Order determining the acts and works that are exempt from

- an urban development permit;
- the advice of the authorised official, of the municipality;
- the advice of the Royal Commission on Monuments and Sites;
- the consultation committee;
- the special rules for disclosure or for the involvement of an architect (the so-called commission of 'small works').

One must be careful in specifying the scope of such an exemption (with reference to certain themes raised by these colonial traces) and ensure that a dialogue with the public takes place, despite the exemption from a public inquiry regarding the permit exemption (cf. *infra* and *Chapter 6*).

With regard to marking actions considered ~~vandalism~~, the Working Group recommends that in the case of contested colonial traces and symbols, a supervised (participatory) procedure should be applied as a temporary measure to avoid the moral component of the crime of vandalism (Article 534bis and ter), or rather the owner's consent should be obtained.

Regarding marking or demolition actions, the Working Group recommends that a controlled (participatory) procedure be put in place to avoid the moral element of the offence referred to in Article 526 of the Penal Code and to obtain in any way the owner's consent.

With regard to the infringement of intellectual property rights on the integrity of a work considered a colonial symbol, the Working Group recommends a case by case analysis to weigh up the rights of the artist against the rights of the owner and those of society in general; and engaging in dialogue with the author or his heirs.

7.1.4. Remembrance Education

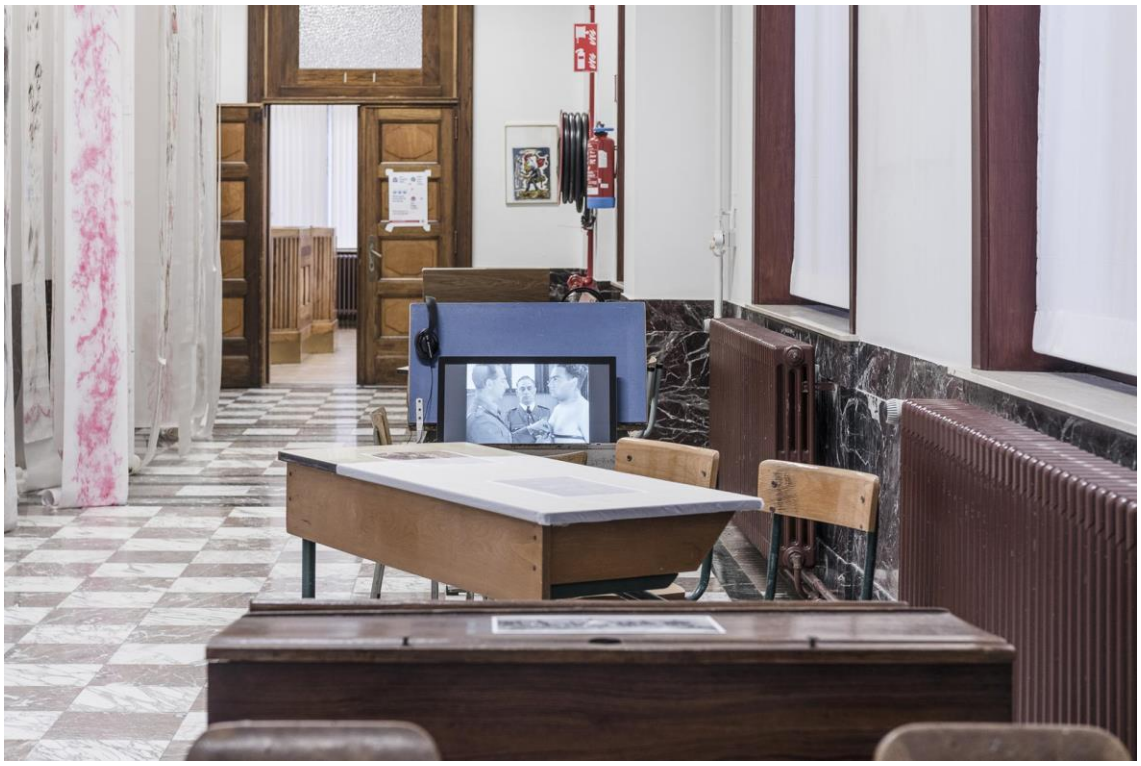

FIG. 37. Pélagie Gbaguidi, *The Missing Link. Decolonisation Education by Mrs Smiling Stone*, 2017 (installation during Congoville in 2021). With the authorization of the artist and Xeno X.

The challenge is to combine the revision of the official representation of colonial memory in the public space with the dissemination of knowledge about colonial history and a reflection on its lasting, current effects in Belgium and in the countries of former Belgian Africa.

Remembrance education must:

- offer citizens the image of an honest and resilient Brussels in the face of its colonial past;
- recognise the historical role of Brussels as the epicentre of official monumental memories of colonisation in the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi and provide critical tools for problematising this monumental memory;
- acknowledge the history of the presence of Congolese, Burundians and Rwandans in Brussels;
- organise moments of reflection, conferences, debates and awareness-raising activities on this theme.

This remembrance education is currently largely limited to the activities of Sub-Saharan African associations such as *Bakushinta*, *Bamko* and *Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Lutte contre les Discriminations* which organise decolonial walks in Brussels around certain themes or in certain neighbourhoods. Since this method has proven its usefulness, we recommend that these initiatives be rolled out on a larger scale and that other organisations offering guided tours in Brussels be encouraged to employ guides of Sub-Saharan African descent. The involvement of decolonial associations must become

a systematic part of the entire process. Proper employment conditions and compensation are also part of it.

7.2. General recommendations for the Brussels-Capital Region

7.2.1. A regional decolonisation policy

7.2.1.1. General

The Brussels-Capital Region must develop a decolonisation plan on the scale of the entire Region that takes into account the distribution of colonial traces throughout the Region: some municipalities or even neighbourhoods are more marked by different types of colonial traces than others. Only the Region can maintain a complete overview, including the development of new themes and representations spread throughout the territory.

We advocate for a proper balance between coordination within the Brussels Region and local policies on decolonising public space. In this way, the local actions can also be an elaboration of a shared vision and the regional plan can also include the involvement of and input from the municipalities, who should be encouraged to become involved.

This plan will serve as a general scenario, with input from the municipalities, for coordinating the transformation of specific areas and clusters (cf. *§5.2.2*).

Based on these common goals, the municipalities can develop certain components of this plan themselves. The Region must support the 19 Brussels municipalities in their process of decolonising public space by giving them the tools they need to make decisions in their own municipalities.

A master plan for the entire Region allows for the depiction and direction of concrete scenarios for the transformations of urban memory sites and the development of new memory sites in the territory in a spatially and thematically coordinated manner. In particular, urban clusters of traces (for example, in the Quartier Royal and the Quartier Leopold) and colonial heritage with an urban dimension (for example, the Parc du Cinquantenaire with its axes) require the formation of a vision on the scale of the urban region. A master plan also provides a framework to check and guide the necessary guaranteed presence and distribution of themes (cf. *§5.2.*) and representations to be developed. The balance between (critical) heritage valorisation and urban transformation can also be made explicit through a master plan.

The master plan should also be developed in dialogue with civil society, other policy levels, institutions, urban actors, and the follow-up committee (cf. *§7.2.2.*). At the same time, it is itself a vision document that mobilises and enable further dialogue and appropriation when sub-projects are developed by, for example, a municipality or a

federal museum institution. The establishment of coordinated collaborations with federal museum institutions, for example, is also best done through the Region.

7.2.1.2. Annual commemorative days

Memories should be marked not only in space but also in time through the organisation of

- an annual day of commemoration on colonial history that:
    - should commemorate victims of colonisation,
    - must honour the resilience and resistance of colonial subjects,
    - should encourage reflection on the role that Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians have played in Belgian history;
- an annual commemoration of the independence of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. Former Prime Minister Sophie Wilmès set a precedent when, in 2020, she inaugurated a memorial for Congolese independence in the entrance to the town hall in Ixelles.

7.2.1.3. A national monument commemorating the victims of the Belgian colonisation of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi

This monument is ideally created in a symbolically charged place. Among the specific recommendations (cf. *§7.4.*), Place du Trône is identified as a suitable location, in a replacement scenario (with material reuse) of the current equestrian statue of Leopold II.

7.2.1.4. Establishment of a documentation centre

In the short term, a documentation centre should be established

- to make an inventory of all the colonial and postcolonial heritage in collaboration with various experts: not only colonial memorials, but also traces that point to the history of the presence of Congolese, Burundians and Rwandans;
- to make the information on this heritage available
    - to the municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region:
    - to the public and to do so through various media: an interactive app, organised walks, publication of books (for example in the series Bruxelles, Ville d'art et d'histoire / Brussel, Stad van Kunst en Geschiedenis), texts on the documentation centre's website, etc.
- to serve as a point of reference for the Brussels municipalities and the follow-up committee;
- to establish contacts with other organisations working on the same theme from an international perspective;
- to prepare the analysis of concrete cases to support further decision-making;
- to act as an intermediary between the various actors (lawyers, officials, experts, institutions, civil society, etc.) in support of the follow-up committee;
- to provide a point of contact and support for businesses, financial institutions, the hospitality industry, private individuals, public institutions (cultural institutions, schools), religious organisations, associations, etc., that

    - raises awareness with them about the issue of colonial traces,
    - encourages them to (commission) research on the role they played in the colonial past and/or the history of the presence of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians and their descendants and share that information with the public through their website, publications, exhibitions, etc.
- to advise specific private institutions to correct erroneous information about the colonial past (e.g. the information on the website of the *Hôtel des Colonies* in Saint-Josse-ten-Noode)

7.2.1.5. Creation of a museum on Brussels as a colonial and postcolonial city

In the (medium)long term, this documentation centre should be housed in a physical museum about Brussels as a colonial city and postcolonial city in relation to its colonial past. The museum ensures that 'no memory is lost' but that the city, and its visitors, can actively develop a critical memory. With permanent and temporary exhibitions, the museum offers an overview and insight into the historical coherence of the development of Brussels and its monuments with the (post)colonial history of Belgium and its (former) colony and mandate areas. The museum can also accommodate a number of (smaller) sculptures and monuments that were moved from public space. They can be critically contextualised there, along with, for example, relevant archival records, documents and testimonies.

7.2.1.6. Establishment of a central 'dumping ground' for discarded busts, monuments, statues, plaques etc.

In addition to the establishment of a museum with a documentation centre, the working group also recommends the construction of a central 'dumping ground' for the Region, where (also large) discarded colonial statues and other commemorative monuments that were removed from the public space can be housed, as one of the possible destinations (some statues do end up in a museum, for example). This type of 'dumping ground'/repository is not a mere logistical infrastructure, but a symbolic public place and one of the components that will mark the decolonial transformation of the urban landscape and its monuments.

Furthermore, under the heading of specific recommendations, the Working Group recommends that this area for (fragments of) removed colonial monuments be established in the Parc du Cinquantenaire (cf. *§7.4.1.3*). Three points of interest:

- Importance of aesthetics and its meaning: no arrangement of the objects as monuments, also no cemetery aesthetics.
- Importance of the meaning of the name: not a museum, cemetery, but a repository (e.g. nuclear waste repository)/dumping ground (exact name to be further considered). It is more of a *'dépotoir'* than a depot. After all, depot sounds like a heritage or museum depot, i.e. what is kept for later display or examination. It should be clear, however, that these are deliberately symbolic and materially abandoned former objects of veneration.
- Limited information should be given on the content and logic of the 'dumping ground'.

7.2.1.7. Relocation of certain colonial sculptures in public spaces to museums in Brussels, including federal museums

Museums in Brussels can play a key role in bringing about an updated, decolonial and multi-voiced history of Belgium's colonial past, interacting with the monumental representations of this history and the marked colonial urban heritage in the public space. This assumes an active decolonial policy that is not limited to the contextualisation of the statues, busts, plaques, etc. that may eventually end up in museum collections, but also takes into account the personnel policy, especially in the area of curators, collection development, exhibition programming, cooperation with external curators from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi/of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian origin, etc. (cf. *§3.3.11*.).

It can be art (historical) museums, such as the Museum of Ixelles, the Royal Museums of Art and History, the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, but also the Royal Institute of Natural Sciences, etc., provided that images are not exhibited there merely because of their aesthetic or historical qualities but are actively and critically contextualised. We are aware that many museums are struggling with spatial constraints, but the Working Group nevertheless urges meaningful collaborations to remove problematic monuments from public spaces and contextualise them in a museum setting.

7.2.1.8. New memorials, monuments and artworks in public spaces

Not only the replacement of existing and the creation of new memorials (including toponyms) on the (post)colonial history will contribute to decolonising the Brussels public space and make it more inclusive. Art in public space can also contribute to this. The working group recommends that the creation of new monuments and works of art in public space should explicitly offer opportunities to artists and designers of Sub-Saharan African origin living in Belgium.

7.2.1.9. Some general recommendations regarding intentional colonial traces

7.2.1.9.1. *General*

As a vector of change, the Region must initiate a participatory and educational process for the renaming of streets and the removal and replacement of monuments on regional roads. Since the coloniality of our urban fabric is linked to the Royal Museum for Central Africa via the Avenue de Tervuren, a partnership between the Brussels Region and the Municipality of Tervuren must be established.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, history cannot be reduced to the actions of individual 'heroes' (and to a lesser extent 'heroines'). Decolonising public space must nevertheless end the large existing imbalance to achieve better representation in terms of gender, origin and a number of themes, including:

- black people who played a role in the struggle to abolish the transatlantic slave trade;
- Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians who:
    - contributed in various ways to the political and economic decolonisation of their countries;

- fought in/for Belgium during the two World Wars or were members of a resistance movement or the secret army during World War II;
- were important figures in the artistic, cultural, economic, literary, political, social, etc. fields, not only during the colonial, but also during the pre-colonial and postcolonial periods.

The first criterion in this regard should be the addressing of the shared history between Belgium, Congo, Rwanda and Burundi and a second criterion is that it involves individuals of Sub-Saharan African descent who have a link to Belgium. For example, one should not prioritise Nelson Mandela above Patrice Lumumba, George Floyd above Semira Adamu, Lamine Moïse Bangoura or Yaguine Koita and Fodé Tounkara, Rosa Parks or Miriam Makeba above Mathilde Idalie Huysmans or Marie N'koi. In so doing, it is important to explain what these individuals accomplished.

7.2.1.9.2. *Toponymy*

Although women make up half of the population, only 6.1% of all street names in the Brussels-Capital Region refer to women (De Sloover 2020). Among the proposals made on the site https://equalstreetnames.brussels/nl/index.html#10.78/50.8389/4.363, we find a number of Congolese women (Sophie Kanza, Maman Marie Muilu Kiawanga Nzitani, Marie N'koi, Belgian-Congolese Mathilde Idalie Huysmans, Nigerian Semira Adamu and South African Miriam Makeba).

Recently, STIB renamed a bus stop on Rue des Colonies to Rosa Parks stop. We realise that changing a bus or tram stop is easier than changing a street name or the name of a subway stop, but the contrast between the street name and the name of the bus stop in question is painful and difficult to understand for the general public who do not necessarily realise who is responsible for these changes.

The nature and location of streets, squares, etc. named after persons from Sub-Saharan Africa is a particular concern. The Square Patrice Lumumba, for example, is a square where no one lives and which is only populated by passers-by. This undermines the symbolic significance of giving the new name.

We recommend creating a chronology of the names that need to be changed as a priority. In anticipation, all colonial toponyms would ideally be explained.

Names that lead to confusion such as Rue Charles Lemaire in Auderghem and Rue Renkin in Schaerbeek (cf. *§4.3.2.5*.) should be accompanied by a brief explanation. A good general rule of thumb is that if someone is deemed worthy of giving his/her name to a public space, the public has a right to know why that is so.

In ambiguous cases, such as General Jacques (cf. *§4.3.2.1.*) and Alexandre Galopin (cf. *§4.3.2.2.*), we recommend a name change, given the need for the representation of people belonging to groups in a minority position.

7.2.1.9.3. Statues, busts, monuments, plaques, etc.

The location of a three-dimensional, colonial memorial can be an important consideration in deciding its future.

Cemeteries are public spaces, but graves themselves are private. Cemeteries are places where people come to commemorate their closest deceased. Dead people should be able to rest in peace at their final burial sites and their next of kin should be respected at all times. Therefore, we recommend that, for example, the tombstone of Hubert Lothaire with an inscription by Albert I (cf. *§3.3.9.*) be left untouched, even though one can raise serious questions about the man's actions in Congo Free State.

With regard to Leopold II, the Working Group proposes to distinguish between plaques on private property commemorating the inauguration of buildings by this king, such as the Galeries Royales Saint-Hubert, which are privately owned, and statues erected in his memory in public spaces. It does not unilaterally recommend that all statues of Leopold II be removed from public spaces, but rather that the monumental memory of Leopold II be critically dismantled and updated through various intervention strategies. The removal or major transformation of the most important monument in honour of Leopold II, i.e. the equestrian statue in Place du Trône (cf. *§7.4.1.1.*), should usher in this official revision at the Capital Region level. In other images, in different municipalities, consultation processes may arrive at similar or different narratives and interventions. In addition, the working group also proposes to systematically identify where and in what way Leopold II shaped the public space in the Brussels-Capital Region and thus to problematise urban places and infrastructure as well as colonial heritage, linked to this monarch, in a broader sense.

7.2.1.10. Signage, protection, decolonial valorisation and accessibility of colonial and postcolonial heritage

7.2.1.10.1. Signage

Clear and coherent signage should be developed for colonial and postcolonial heritage in all its forms:

- individual plaques for:
    - Intentional colonial commemorative symbols: statues, busts, monuments, plaques, street names...;
    - historical persons and events: a system similar to *English Heritage's* blue plaques (see: https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/blue-plaques/);
    - historic buildings and sites: a system similar to the plaques in Brussels-Capital;
- an overview of historic buildings and sites in a neighbourhood: a system similar to the plaques in Brussels-Capital;
- providing information about the changes regarding contested intentional commemorative symbols and indicating, for example, the date of removal, replacement, historical information, etc.

7.2.1.10.2. Protection

With targeted protections of historic buildings and urban sites, important (representative as well as rare) testimonies to the administrative, economic, and cultural role of Brussels as the capital of the colonial metropolis must be preserved, as well as representative and

rare testimonies to the presence and actions of colonised persons and their descendants during and after the colonial period.

7.2.1.10.3. Decolonial valorisation and outreach

The necessary intellectual and financial investments must be put in place to make the colonial heritage accessible and open to experience by the public. The contextualisation, interpretation, and heritage work around the heritage objects should also be updated from a decolonial point of view.

7.2.2. A follow-up committee

This committee will oversee the follow-up and implementation of the Working Group's recommendations. We believe it is important that this committee could get a professional/institutional profile over the long term, so that its work is not limited to the political will of the moment.

The committee will also create a network of the various actors including citizens, cultural institutions and associations, heritage actors, artists, political representatives, associations of Afrodescendants, etc. In addition to ensuring equitable representation in the decision-making process, the committee should also act as a reference institution and perform the following tasks, among others:

- develop a methodology for decolonisation in collaboration with community residents and experts, including Afrodescendant associations, that takes into account good practices in the Brussels-Capital Region and elsewhere;
- name a commemorative day (cf. *§7.2.1.2.*) and choose a date related to colonial history but different from the independence dates or the main dates of Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi;
- prepare a list of problematic colonial toponymy and a priority list of the names that should be renamed initially;
- draw up a list of associations active in decolonising the public space in Brussels, such as *Bakushinta, Bamko, Change, Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Lutte contre les Discriminations* and strengthen their capacity by allowing them to obtain grants and by offering them structural follow-up;
- consult with the advisory group assembled by Secretary of State for Recovery, Strategic Investments and Science Policy Thomas Dermine to make proposals on the future of the Parc du Cinquantenaire in the run-up to the 200th anniversary of Belgian independence (cf. *§7.4.1.3.*);
- draw up a list of various forms of resilience, opposition, and resistance (artistic, cultural, military, religious, etc. level) by enslaved persons (such as Oloudah Equiano, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Marie-Cessette Dumas, Abram Petrovich Gannibal, Ignatio Sanchez), Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians and Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian descent during the colonial and postcolonial periods (such as Paul Bonga Bonga, Augusta Chiwy, Paul Panda Farnana, Adou Elenga, Mathilde Idalie Huysmans, Lusinga lwa Ng'ombe, Joseph Malula, Marie

Muilu, Denis Mukwege, Louis Rwagasore, Lomami Tshibamba) who can be remembered in public space.

Indeed, it is important that Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians are not always and primarily portrayed as victims of Belgian colonisation.

7.2.3. A decolonial awareness and recruitment policy for Urban Brussels

The adoption of several resolutions and the creation of the Working Group indicate the willingness of the Brussels government to initiate a decolonial process that begins with awareness and learning about colonial history and its postcolonial consequences. Officials in charge of implementing a decolonisation policy must be made aware at all levels, through decolonial walks, reading, lectures, the organisation of conferences, workshops, exhibitions, etc., of what decolonisation is all about.

The diversification of the Urban Brussels team is a necessary requirement for decolonising public space in terms of urban planning, cultural heritage and urban appreciation.

7.3 Additional general recommendations for the 19 municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region

Municipalities should undertake research on colonial traces based on their archives and in collaboration with different types of experts (cf. *§7.1.1.*).

The municipal level is the site of civil dialogue and therefore the basis of the process of social dialogue that we want to make central. To this end, each municipality should establish a public space decolonisation group composed primarily of representatives of civil society, including Sub-Saharan African associations and members of municipal staff, whose tasks should include:

- the selection of temporary participatory works in collaboration with the Cultural Service of the municipality;
- in the case of contested colonial memorials:
    - the organisation of ceremonies, debates and information meetings, in which residents, experts, voluntary organisations and other (extra) local actors participate, which should contribute to remembrance education;
    - determine the communication of the whole process,
    - decide on the future of each specific case;
- in collaboration with local and external experts, organisations, individuals, associations, etc., conduct research on the colonial past of the municipality and on the history of the presence of Congolese, Burundians and Rwandans and make this information available to residents through various channels.

7.4. Recommendations for some colonial traces

7.4.1. Statues, monuments, plaques, and sites to be reviewed with priority as examples and catalysts of a more comprehensive process and of possible scenarios

The various statues, monuments, plaques and locations are described in *Chapter 4*.

7.4.1.1. The equestrian statue of Leopold II at Place du Trône

There is enough support within the working group to remove or modify the statue of King Leopold II, the most important representation of this sovereign in Brussels in the Place du Trône (cf. analysis *§4.3.1.1.*). Not least because it is located in a very prominent place in the Quartier Royal, Belgium's political centre, and is visible along the Brussels city ring-road. The statue of Leopold II at Place du Trône is not protected but is located in a protected zone.

Since the equestrian statue of Leopold II is in a state of regular unofficial protest, cleaning and preservation cannot continue. The Working Group agrees that adding informative historical or other interpretation to the existing monument or merely developing a performative critical commemorative practice around the monument cannot suffice as a long-term scenario either.

We recommend a phased process, with space for social dialogue, but also put forward a horizon of two concrete scenarios to be further defined and developed.

A. Phase of social dialogue

A.1. The equestrian statue remains temporarily on its pedestal but is visually disconnected from its relationship to public space by a temporary structure that conceals it (e.g. a tent or scaffold structure, a pavilion, or a cylindrical wall that keeps the statue standing in the open). This structure hides the statue and is accessible to the public: visitors can move to an elevated platform from where they do not have to feel 'dominated' by the image of the king as they don't have to look up at the statue.

The enclosing structure's function is not merely to counteract and hide the monumentality of the statue; it could also serve as an on-site information tool:

- In support of a historical account through text and images of Leopold II, colonial history and its repercussions in today's society; and a commentary explaining why this memorial is in doubt. (This explanation can be found, for example, on the inside of the cylinder).
- As a communication tool about the intervention process (timeframe, actors) and the development of concrete scenarios (e.g. on the outside of the cylinder). Information on this topic may change over time.

- this situation could run over a period of three years:
    - during this timeframe, other key elements of a regional plan can be elaborated and put into place - e.g. the development of a repository for the removed statues, the creation of a museum dedicated to Brussels as a colonial city;
    - During this period, social dialogue and political decision-making on the choice and detailed elaboration of a permanent scenario for this monument takes place.

Each of these scenarios should be able to be the subject of a social dialogue, guaranteeing public support after a carefully organised process of historical and sociological clarification, active consultation with citizens, organisations and other stakeholders, scenario development, democratic decision-making and artistic elaboration in the form of concrete and convincing proposals.

A.2. Remove the statue from its pedestal and leave the empty pedestal for temporary artistic interventions.

The working group believes that the empty pedestal will remind Brussels residents why the statue of Leopold II was removed. Performances can be made on this plinth, following the example of SOKL Festival or the Fourth Plinth Project in Trafalgar Square, London (cf. §5.3.1.).

FIG. 37. Céline Gaza, *Hymne*, 2021. Photo: Anne Reijniers, with the authorization of the artists. During the SOKL festival, Céline Gaza paid tribute to the deceased coltan miners by sticking their names onto the pedestal.

B. Decision Making Phase

The Working Group proposes the following avenues for more permanent interventions:

B.1. Melt the statue and use the melted material to create a memorial to the victims of colonisation

The working group believes that remelting a triumphal monument to turn it into a commemorative memorial involves a highly symbolic process that may be appropriate precisely for this highly contested image and purpose:

- Reusing material provides a symbolically strong gesture of change, to which more complex narratives can be associated, which are directly relevant precisely in this case:
    - The materiality of the sculpture allows to refer to the broader theme of the colonial exploitation of Congo's copper and tin, mined by Congolese workers employed by colonial corporations (the copper for the sculpture was supplied by UMHK);
    - In this way, the new story is not only about the old and new performance but also about extraction colonialism, mining and moving materials in the colonial period, and today about ecology;

In this first scenario, the equestrian statue of Leopold II is conceived as an commemorative monument that can no longer represent contemporary society and another intentional monument takes its place. The strength of this scenario lies in the power of the symbolic gesture of this replacement: this is a symbolic way of distancing oneself from this statue, acknowledging the violent nature of Leopold II's rule of Congo, and paying tribute to the victims. The originally problematic historical object does not disappear completely: its materiality is preserved in situ.

FIG. 39. Laura Nsengiyumva, *PeopL*, 2018. (Photo: Julien Truddaïu)

Furthermore, the working group considers this location a good place to establish a national memorial for the victims of Belgian colonisation and colonialism: close to the national political institutions and in a neighbourhood where numerous colonial organisations, companies, institutions were present, but also close to Matonge, a shopping neighbourhood and meeting place for many people of Sub-Saharan African descent from home and abroad.

Artists such as Sammy Baloji, Laura Nsengiyumva and Freddy Tsimba have drawn attention to the colonial essence of materials. The working group therefore suggests that one or more artists be designated who manage this complexity.

The tribute to the victims must be explicit in the artistic intervention to avoid reproducing the violence that was inherent in the original sculpture by celebrating this material.

Even if the statue is melted down, the identical statue will remain in the Royal Museums of Art and History in Parc du Cinquantenaire. However, this must also be contextualised with respect to the colonial past. That has not been the case so far.

B.2. Moving the statue and using the vacated space to tell a new narrative

The originally problematic historical object does not disappear but is moved to a dumping ground for discarded sculptures.

If one wishes to replace the image with something else then it is important to include the following narratives:

- Leopold II's absolute power over Congo Free State;
- the close relationship between Leopold II's government in Congo and capitalism;
- the millions of victims;
- the expropriation of land;
- economic exploitation;
- 'racial classification' and -'segregation';
- the proximity of Matonge;
- various forms of resistance and opposition;
- urban planning projects;
- marking of the royal neighbourhood

Through this intervention, memory is not erased but modified: by removing this problematic image from this highly symbolic place, free space is created to tell a different story. For example, this space could become an educational place to explain why the equestrian statue of Leopold II was problematic and was removed. Another avenue would be to leave room for artistic interventions at this location and transform it into a meeting place.

7.4.1.2. Runaway black slaves surprised by dogs (*Nègres marrons surpris par des chiens*)

This sculpture shows the enslavement of black persons during slavery and how some dogs were trained during that period to follow slaves and other fugitives (cf. analysis *§4.4.1*). This depiction of extreme violence towards black people means that this artwork

can no longer have its place in public space. However, the iconography of violence toward black persons is part of a tradition about which critical awareness is needed.

The Working Group proposes the following avenues for **breaking up the marble statue and reusing the broken-down material to put a new statue in the vacated spot.**

- The image is not linked to the history of Belgium. It has no added value in the public space and it tells nothing about Belgium's involvement during transatlantic slavery.
- The working group recommends that another work of art dedicated to resistance to transatlantic slavery be placed on the vacant site.
- The vacated space could also serve to place a work of art that depicts persons of Sub-Saharan African descent in a non-stereotypical manner or depicts contemporary urban diversity;
- A plaster version of the statue can also be found today (equally problematic) in the Palais de Justice.
- If one removes or recycles the sculpture then one should put a sign with an explanation where the original sculpture stood to indicate what it was and why it was removed from public space;

The plaster version kept at the Courthouse (Palais de Justice) should be moved to a museum and used as a documentary and didactic object, not simply a work of art. This must be done in a museum that can commit to developing a historically informed and critical narrative around this object (in combination with other objects), focusing on the relationships between transatlantic slavery and colonialism, stereotyping of black persons, violence on black persons, and the relationship between the sculpture and Beecher Stowe's novel as cultural products, and between their ideologies.

- We express no preference about the museum in which this is best done, there are several sensible solutions but this narrative recontextualisation is the decisive condition.
- Territorial proximity is not important in this case – e.g. the sculpture has no specific claim to speak in the name of a municipality (unlike, for example, memorial plaques or monuments to the pioneers of a particular municipality).

7.4.1.3. Parc du Cinquantenaire

As a cluster concentrating several objects in one place (buildings, sculptures, institutions...), the Parc du Cinquantenaire requires a coordinated approach (cf. analysis *§4.3.1.2.*).

The Parc du Cinquantenaire, as a park on the Rue de la Loi-Tervueren axis, and including its buildings, has a high density of symbols and traces linked to the colonial history. Each in their own, and certainly together, they are barely visible today.

The working group recommends that for the entire Parc du Cinquantenaire, the numerous colonial elements should be visually highlighted together in situ and disclosed with information in an archaeological themed route through the park. For each individual trace can be identified which additional interventions are needed.

In this report, the Working Group limits itself to discussing the following monuments located in the Parc du Cinquantenaire:

1. The Triumphal Arch
2. The commemorative plate about the Belgian Dynasty and Congo
3. The monument to the Belgian pioneers in Congo
4. The statue of Albert Thys
5. Autoworld as venue of the 2nd Pan-African Congress

Consequently, in this report we will not provide recommendations on: the Royal Museums of Art and History (cf. analysis *§4.3.1.2.3.*) and the Royal Museum of the Army and Military History (cf. analysis *§4.3.1.2.4.*), the mosque, or the pavilion of human passions. However, the Working Group strongly recommends that the two museums mentioned above evaluate and rethink their collections and displays from a decolonial perspective. This is the only way to achieve a integral revision of the colonial traces on the site of the Parc du Cinquantenaire.

For the Parc du Cinquantenaire, the working group believes an ambitious project is needed. In the short term, all colonial sites in the park should be marked and it should be made clear how closely Belgian nationalism and colonialism were intertwined. In the longer term, an urban planning project should be set up to thematise the central, imperialist axis between the Royal Palace in Brussels City and the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren.

7.4.1.3.1 The Triumphal Arch

The Working Group proposes to highlight the history of the triumphal arch so that Brussels residents can learn about the link between the triumphal arch and Belgium's colonial past (cf. analysis *§4.3.1.2.2.*).

7.4.1.3.2. The commemorative plate Belgian Dynasty and Congo

The Working Group notes that this memorial site is not very visible and is hardly known (cf. analysis *§4.3.1.2.3.6.*). It therefore needs to be better signposted and explained. The plate was recently daubed with red paint. The working group proposes not to remove it.

7.4.1.3.3. The monument to the Belgian pioneers in Congo

The different scenes of this monument form a complete overview of almost all standard elements of Belgian official colonial discourse from the interwar period, the most important period of procolonial propaganda, including through colonial monuments (cf. analysis *§4.3.1.2.3.7.*). Those elements are shown blatantly. The monument is therefore of great didactic value for learning about this problematic colonial discourse that still permeates Belgian society. That instrumental value must be seized upon by discussing and refuting all of the components that actively demonstrate racist and colonialism-legitimising ideologies.

Consequently, the Working Group proposes the following recommendations:

Scenario 1): preserve this monument materially and at its location in the Parc du Cinquantenaire

- The working group recommends that this monument be converted into another monument with new meaning. The converted monument then becomes the bearer of a new narrative and is also renamed '**Monument for the deconstruction of Belgian colonial propaganda**'.
    - The substantive deconstruction is symbolised and supported by a material deconstruction of the monument.
    - In so doing, the monument is dismantled by dividing it into its part-scenes (image + text message) and thus not randomly divided into fragments.
    - The parts are reassembled in a new support structure, e.g. a steel 3D grid, possibly partially enveloped to form an open pavilion, that allows each of the different parts (scenes) to be recontextualised and countered visually and with text; false historical facts and arguments are refuted and current historical knowledge on these topics is referenced. Other representations and inscriptions are added. (Absent topics may also be added.)
- The propagandistic scenes and slogans in the existing moment are so blatant that the monument is ideally suited to deconstructing 'itself'.
- The Working Group also points out the importance of the explicit reference to ‘Arabe’/'Araabschen' (Arab) in this monument and its relevance for the Brussels population: the monument allows not only to address and condemn the historical colonial superiority discourse of the white European over 'the' black African but also that of the white Europeans over 'the Arab', as well as any identitarian essentialism.

Scenario 2): Destroy this monument and organise a deconstruction of its discourses through a reproduction in a museum

- The Working Group believes that this option is weaker because it disregards the symbolic location of the monument. Therefore, she resolutely recommends that it be kept in situ in the park. Another reason is that it keeps the monument more easily accessible.

7.4.1.3.4. The statue of Albert Thys

The working group proposes that the sculpture be moved to the ‘dumping ground’ for discarded sculptures.

7.4.1.3.5. Autoworld as venue of the 2nd Pan-African Congress

The 2nd Pan-African Congress was organised in the building that now houses Autoworld (cf. analysis *§4.3.1.2.5*).

The Working Group proposes the following recommendations:

1. In front of the entrance to Autoworld, create a photo exhibition of the congress in relation to the history of Pan-Africanism, with a special focus on the organisers

and speakers during the congress. In this way, the memory of also historical actors from countries other than Congo, Rwanda and Burundi is kept alive.

2. Provide a space in the building or elsewhere on the site where African associations can hold meetings and gatherings.

7.4.1.3. Lever House:

Thanks to the protection of the interior and exterior of the building, the preservation of this material testimony to the history of the Belgian colonial companies is assured (cf. analysis *§4.3.3.1*.).

The Working Group proposes the following avenues:

1. **Thematic repurposing** of this former colonial corporate seat of *Savonneries Lever Frères/Huileries du Congo belge* into an Information and Discussion Platform and a museum. This building's history and the material culture around the firm can serve as a starting point for a broader engagement with Brussels as a colonial and postcolonial city:
    - The site should be curated so as to identify and discuss the different colonial elements in the site:
        - Honory vestibule with materials referring to the architecture of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, and with the two bronze sculptures representing a Pende man cutting palm nuts and a Pende woman.
        - The former 'cinema' and 'museum' on the ground floor at the back could possibly be conceptually reconstructed and replaced with an actual projection room.
    - Topics to be addressed directly through this case study:
        - The presence of private and public actors of the colonial system, in and around the Quartier Royal (urban history)
        - The presence of private and public actors of the colonial system: Unilever, created in 1930 from a merger of British Lever Brothers and the Dutch Margarine Unie, has a strong presence in Belgium and owns the building in Rue Montoyer with an inscription and bas-relief representing its activity.
        - Lever Brothers as an example of concession exploitation (land, population/labour, natural resources), in this case in the field of palm oil extraction, allows the economic model of the Congo Free State, Belgian Congo, and the postcolonial period (economic history)
        - Visual culture of colonialism at, among others, international exhibitions: architecture, fine arts, museography (art history and visual culture)
        - Official propaganda and corporate propaganda (political history, media history)
        - Congolese resistance and repression of resistance: the so-called 'revolt' of the Pende (history)

- To be realised in the short term:

Information and discussion platform on colonial and postcolonial heritage and decolonisation in Brussels (information, participation, process, action)

- Decoloniality should therefore also get a sufficiently strong symbolic presence at the site, to balance the historical-colonial dimensions in the building, for example by reconstructing a cinema for decolonial messages or by means of participatory events with a grandstand, project spaces, etc.
- Official site of the Brussels-Capital Region, where other actors can also be received
- A documentation centre is the minimum that should be realised in the short term.

- To be realised in the long term:

A museum in Brussels about Belgian colonial history, about Brussels as a colonial and postcolonial city, and about decoloniality (historical education)

- New institution, or satellite institution of an existing Brussels or federal institution
- In this museum, some of the sculptures removed from public spaces (and from the interiors of institutions) can also be exhibited within critically interpretive exhibitions, but at this location the museum may not be the only gathering place for removed colonial monuments and works of art.

- Variant:

  If the building were to receive another repurposing, the Working Group recommends that Lever House's colonial past nonetheless be told in a concentrated way through punctual displays on the exterior, in the vestibule and the movie room.

2. Marking the building's exterior: showing this hidden history on the street

- Variant (a) Marking Lever House as part of a cluster of colonial administration buildings, business buildings and organisations in the Quartier Royal and the Leopold Quarter

  With uniform signs? Route and app?

- Variant b) Artistic intervention that makes the colonial past and the new institution visible in the public space of Rue Royale and Place du Congrès.
  - This is a delicate task, given the ensemble character of Place du Congrès
  - There is a content-relevant proximity to the Congress Column (Colonne du Congrès / Congreskolom) as a celebration of constitutional freedoms, and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Each of these national memorial sites can also be problematised with regard to the exclusion of Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians.

7.4.1.5. Bust of General Storms at the Square de Meeûs in Ixelles:

- The working group believes that a violent figure like Storms deserves no place in the public space (cf. analysis *§4.3.1.3.*).
- We don't need the bust of Storms to raise the issue of colonial violence.

The working group proposes that the sculpture be destroyed or moved along with the pedestal to a dumping ground and replaced with a sculpture of a Sub-Saharan African Ixellian. This intervention continues the theme of a pantheon:

  - The object fits into the landscape logic of the personal monuments on the square: one of many, punctual, not dominant images on the square, albeit different from the other as a contemporary commemorative object
  - If the bust of Storms would be replaced with a commemoration of a person of Sub-Saharan African descent from the municipality of Ixelles, who resisted colonisation, it is necessary to interpret the term 'resistance' in the broad sense. For example, replacing Storms' image with one created by a Congolese artist is a powerful symbol in itself.

- Despite the fact that the bust of General Storms is located in a protected site (the Square de Meeûs), the working group notes that the bust was installed after the square was laid out and that the removal in itself will have little effect on the appearance of the square.

7.4.1.6. Hôtel van Eetvelde:

Hôtel van Eetvelde is a private monument.

In any case, the Working Group proposes to contextualise this monument by drawing attention to its colonial aspects in the heritage narrative (cf. analysis *§4.3.3.1.*). The recommended intervention would be:

- to develop the various historical connections between this key building from the art history canon, art nouveau and colonial history by, for example, inviting the owners, or the administration with the consent of the owners, to integrate reflections on the colonial dimension in their in situ documentation, in their communication channels, publications, event programming, even develop links with the outdoor markers around the building, with a view to a colonial heritage route. It is important to extend the problematisation of colonial history to the broader discourse on heritage. This is about developing a broader heritage narrative;
- to recommend that the owners, *Explore Brussels* and the entire art nouveau network (BANAD...) would occasionally use this prestigious world heritage site to host decolonial events in their meeting rooms. The ground plan of the Hôtel van Eetvelde was conceived to receive visitors in and around the central octagonal hall. This stunning architectural framework can serve as a venue for representative events for organisations of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian Brussels, decolonial events, etc. (symbolic appropriation).

Additional scenario: Integration of a (reversible) work of art that accommodates a decolonial perspective and absent voices and narratives.

- The property was designed by Victor Horta, who died in 1947, which means that elements of copyright that may have applied to his architectural plans have been in the public domain since 2017. Nevertheless, the Hôtel van Eetvelde is a monument protected as a World Heritage Site. So an intervention here can have much greater consequences. Hôtel van Eetvelde is privately owned and its colonial references are not visible from public spaces.

7.4.1.7. Boulevard Géneral Jacques:

The Working Group proposes the following recommendations:

- Name change

Without wishing to detract from General Jacques' contributions during World War I, the Working Group believes that because of his cruel attitude toward the inhabitants of Congo Free State (as indicated in his own writings), General Jacques deserves no place in public space. Instead, the avenue will be named in reference to Congolese resilience or resistance during the colonial period. However, it must be taken into account that the impact of a street name change is greater in the lives of citizens than that of a monument change.

7.4.1.8. The Monument to the Colonial Pioneers of Ixelles

The Working Group proposes the following avenues:

Move the monument to a museum in Ixelles and replace the monument with a tribute to (a) Congolese woman/women.

- The Working Group recommends that the Municipality of Ixelles actively develops the scenario of the removal and new use for the current monument, as well as its replacement.
- Ixelles is certainly up to the task since the municipality's monument was for 'its pioneers'. Ixelles heritage institutions are then the first places to consider for keeping track of and critically contextualising this removed object. The municipality may also decide to realise the necessary contextualising of the Mangbetu iconography through another institution, in combination with other objects.
- Proposal for a new narrative for a new artwork at the location: representation of Congolese female presence
    - counterdiscourse to the colonial discourse that reduced Congolese women in general and Mangbetu women in particular to sex objects of male colonisers.
    - The gender theme continues to provide continuity in this particular place.

7.4.2.9. The carillon on the Mont des Arts

The stereotypical, colonial representation of the tam-tam player is based on a lack of understanding of the role and importance of orality and music in Congolese culture. At the same time, the carillon also offers the opportunity to introduce intangible Congolese culture into the public space, in addition to material works of art created by Congolese artists, among others.

The Working Group proposes to offer Congolese the opportunity to refute the erroneous colonial image by contributing to a new programming for the carillon with Congolese rumba and events at the Mont des Arts with rumba concerts: rumba developed during the colonial period as a form of resistance to Belgian colonisation, became an important element of Congolese identity and grew into a cultural production with international influence that was recently included by UNESCO in the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

GLOSSARY

Afrodescendants, Africans, black Africans, Sub-Saharan Africans, Belgians of Sub-Saharan descent....

There is no unanimity among people from Sub-Saharan Africa living in Belgium as to how they should best be referred to. There is a wide range of terms in French and in Dutch:

'African Diaspora', 'African Community', 'Afrobelgian', 'Afrodescendent', 'Afropean', 'Afropolitan', 'Afro Fleming', 'Black', 'Black Belgian', etc.

As stated in the report, 'Africa' is used both to refer to the entire continent that is part of Africa-Eurasia, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Cape of Good Hope (Africa and Eurasia are separated by the Suez Canal), and to Sub-Saharan Africa. Many people who use the term 'Africa' actually mean 'black Africa'. It is not the case that throughout human history the Sahara has acted as a boundary between the peoples living in its north or south or that there are no people in North Africa with dark skin colours similar to those of people south of the Sahara. But it is a fact that only inhabitants from regions south of the Sahara were abducted and enslaved in the context of the transatlantic slave trade. This explains why a term like 'Afrodescendent' (which the United Nations uses to refer to people outside of Africa who are descendants of residents of sub-Saharan Africa) does not refer to someone who is from North Africa. The term refers both to the historical diaspora that arose as a result of the transportation of enslaved people to other continents and to people who have lived outside of Sub-Saharan Africa for a number of years or generations. Although their experiences may differ in various ways, there is not really a strict distinction between Sub-Saharan Africans who moved elsewhere during their lives and their children growing up there. As such, we do not systematically distinguish between Africans and Afrodescendants in the report.

Since North Africa is beyond the scope of the Working Group, strictly speaking we should always refer to 'Sub-Saharan Africans'. However, for reasons of readability, we also use 'Africans' unless it is necessary to distinguish between Africans from north and south of the Sahara.

Congolese, Rwandan, Burundian or Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan, Burundian descent

There is no strict distinction between Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians on the one hand and Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan and Burundian origin on the other: Congolese, Rwandans and Burundians coming to Belgium can have Belgian citizenship, their children growing up in Belgium can consider themselves as Belgians of Congolese, Rwandan or Burundian origin, regardless of their nationality, etc. Persons coming from these countries can experience discrimination and racism (as can all black persons) regardless of their official nationality. On the other hand, official nationalities do play a specific role when it comes to international mobility. Persons of Congolese, Rwandan or Burundian nationality often have difficulties obtaining international travel visas, which leads to imbalances (for example, artistic productions where Congolese, Rwandan or Burundian artists are not allowed to travel to Belgium). Moreover, the DRC prohibits dual citizenship. Consequently, many individuals who feel Congolese have not retained their

Congolese nationality, in order to obtain the nationality of the country in which they reside. Therefore, the Working Group retains the two possible designations.

Slave or enslaved

From the second half of the 20th century, the discussion in the United States to replace the word 'slave' by 'enslaved' to indicate that being a 'slave' was not an innate category or identity, but a social status imposed by a social system of ultimate abuse of power, reached the Netherlands and subsequently, to a lesser extent, also Flanders. Following the English example, it was suggested that the Dutch word for 'slave' also be replaced by the Dutch term for 'enslaved'. This prompted a lot of resistance, for various reasons, including and not least, linguistic ones: the cumbersome *'tot slaaf gemaakte'* does not sound as elegant as 'enslaved' in English and an alternative translation like *'verslaafd'* does not work either as this word has a different meaning in Dutch. Therefore, it is often chosen to use the words *'slaaf'* and *'tot slaaf gemaakte'* alternately, possibly also in combination with other expressions such as *'verkochte mensen'* (sold people) etc. (https://www.slavernijenjij.nl/verantwoording-woordgebruik/). French has also been influenced by this debate. For example, some authors prefer to use *'les personnes colonisées'* rather than *'les colonisés'.*

White

Unlike French, English and German, Dutch has two words for white: '*wit*' and '*blank*'. Both terms have been used for many centuries to refer to skin colour; for example, Snow White (*Sneeuwwitje*). Successive printings of the Van Dale dictionary show that during the 20th century, '*blank*' became the common term to refer to a light skin tone, to distinguish it from people with darker skin tones, while in relation to the skin, '*wit*' was used as a synonym for pale, e.g. *'wit om de neus worden*' (an expression meaning '*to be afraid*') (https://onzetaal.nl/taaladvies/wit-en-blank). We are not aware of any study that examines why this evolution occurred.

Furthermore, '*blank*' can also mean colourless, virginal, unwritten, unprinted, pure, transparent, etc. Since the first half of the 21st century, people with dark skin colour, first in the Netherlands, then also in Flanders, have been contesting the use of the term *'blank'* in the sense of having a light skin colour, as some of the other meanings of the word suggest that the person with a light skin colour is presented as the neutral norm from which people with a darker skin colour deviate. They suggest replacing the word *'blank'* with 'wit' to emphasise that white is as much a racialised category as black, which is subject to change depending on time and location.

Since 2016, Dutch media have started to use *'wit'* as a synonym of or instead of *'blank'*, and a number of Flemish media have followed suit. While the older English 'white supremacy' is translated both as *'witte'* or *'blanke'* supremacy, the more recent 'white saviour' is more often translated as 'witte redder' rather than *'blanke redder'*.

This evolution has prompted resistance from many people who still describe themselves as *'blank'*.

On the one hand, everyone has the right to describe and name themselves as they see fit. On the other hand, the calls by black people to replace *'blank'* with *'wit'* in terms of skin colour is a correction to the fact that in a context of transatlantic slave trade and overseas colonisation, for centuries white people assumed the right to name others according to their own standards. Now black people are appropriating the right to name white people according to their own views. This is not a new phenomenon. As early as 1948, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote:

> *"Car le blanc a joui trois mille ans du privilège de voir sans qu'on le voie ; il était regard pur, la lumière de ses yeux tirait toute chose de l'ombre natale, la blancheur de sa peau c'était un regard encore, de la lumière condensée. L'homme blanc, blanc parce qu'il était homme, blanc comme le jour, blanc comme la vérité, blanc comme la vertu, éclairait la création comme une torche, dévoilait l'essence secrète et blanche des êtres. Aujourd'hui ces hommes noirs nous regardent et notre regard rentre dans nos yeux; des torches noires, à leur tour, éclairent le monde et nos têtes blanches ne sont plus que de petits lampions balancés par le vent" (Sartre 1948: ix).*

The proposal to replace *'blank'* with *'wit'* can be regarded as a decolonial demand. As such, the authors of the Dutch version of this report consistently use *'wit'* instead of *'blank*'. Of course, there are no people with white or black skin colour. The terms refer to the contrasts between lighter and darker skin colours and to the social constructs linked to them throughout the centuries. For even though these are social constructs, they do have a very real impact on individual and collective life experiences, and particularly those of black individuals. There is also debate in the U.S. about the capitalisation of 'B/black' and 'W/white' to designate these social constructs. In French, some authors have decided not to use a capital letter to emphasise the social construction of the noun '*Noir*', *'Blanc*', '*Juif*', '*Arabe*' and to question or even deconstruct an essentialising identity evoked by the capital letter. However, the Working Group has chosen to remain faithful, in both French and Dutch, to the spelling standard for these terms.

~~Vandalism~~

The Working Group chose to use the term 'vandalism' but to consistently cross it out in the report to problematise its negative connotation. When material markings are inflicted as a protest against colonial traces, it is not about gratuitous, destructive vandalism without purpose, but an active form of citizenship whose purpose is to question public space and its symbols of the colonial past (cf. *§2.4.2.*).

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