

# Approaching Controversial Monuments

## Examples of Decolonisation in Bremen and Hamburg (Germany)

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### ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel stellt die öffentlichen Debatten der letzten Jahre über umstrittene Denkmäler in Bremen und Hamburg vor, die direkt oder indirekt mit dem Kolonialismus verbunden sind. Eine Reihe von Beispielen zeigt, dass sich auch in Deutschland trotz gegenläufiger Tendenzen das historische Bewusstsein für koloniale Verantwortung zugunsten der Opferperspektive verschoben hat.

Anders als in den USA oder Großbritannien wird in den beiden Hansestädten Bremen und Hamburg jedoch nicht die Existenz umstrittener Denkmäler in Frage gestellt, sondern in der Regel das Fehlen eines begleitenden Kommentars oder Kontextes thematisiert. Hier sind didaktische Ansätze zur Präsentation von Denkmälern gefragt, die im Sinne des Denkmalschutzes darauf abzielen, das kulturelle Erbe dauerhaft zu bewahren.

Insbesondere durch den Verzicht auf feste Installationen können reversible und temporäre Rekontextualisierungen – wie am Beispiel des Bismarck-Denkmal in Bremen gezeigt wird – die Perspektive für interessierte Betrachter\*innen verändern und so das öffentliche Interesse aufrechterhalten, ohne die Integrität des Erbes zu beschädigen. Die im Beitrag angeführten Beispiele zeigen, dass gesellschaftliche Traumata über Denkmäler vermittelt werden, diese zur Bildung beitragen und dazu dienen können, in einer Kontroverse einen demokratischen Minimalkonsens zu entwickeln. Die These des Beitrags ist daher, dass nicht nur eine wichtige Quelle verloren geht, wenn umstrittene Denkmäler abgetragen werden oder ihres städtischen Kontextes beraubt sind, sondern auch ein Ort der direkten Auseinandersetzung verloren geht.

### ABSTRACT

From the 19th century onwards, monuments were erected all over the world to symbolise history, social aspirations and values. These monuments characterized the public space of cities. Over time, however, they themselves became cultural heritage that were often overlooked, forgotten and at best perceived as curious pieces of street furniture. In some cases, they even became objects of social controversy.

This article presents the public debates of recent years, concerning controversial monuments in Bremen and Hamburg that are directly or indirectly linked to colonialism. A number of examples demonstrate that in Germany, too – despite opposing trends – historical awareness of colonial responsibility has shifted in favour of the victim perspective.

However, unlike in the United States or Great Britain, the debates in the two Hanseatic cities of Bremen and Hamburg do not question the existence of controversial monuments, but generally focus instead on the lack of accompanying commentary or context. This calls for didactic approaches to present memorial sites – which is ultimately in the spirit of monument protection – aiming to permanently preserve cultural heritage as historical sources. In particular, by dispensing with permanent installations, reversible and strictly temporary recontextualizations – such as at the Bismarck Monument in Bremen – can change the perspective for interested viewers, thereby maintaining public interest without damaging the integrity of the heritage.

It is obvious that monuments can also convey feelings and passions as cultural heritage if they are placed in the right context. The examples given here show that they can illustrate social traumas, contribute to education and serve to develop a minimum democratic consensus in a polarizing controversy. Not only is an important source lost when controversial monuments are missing or deprived of their urban context, but we also lose a place of direct debate.

## Introduction

Memorials have played an important role in the culture of remembrance for nation-states since the 19th century. An inflationary number of memorials placed on squares or in other striking urban or cultural settings conveyed an educational canon for the citizenship that conformed to the ruling class.<sup>1</sup>

Memorials frequently become overlooked and cease to be a focal point, due to their everyday nature. However, over time, memorials also gain new meanings as a result of social awareness processes and emotional projections. This aligns with the concept of relative art value from Alois Riegl's seminal work, *Der Moderne Denkmalkultus* (1903). Memorials evolve into monuments – some of which are listed as historical witnesses, as discussed in this paper.

Following the protests that began in Cape Town in 2015 with *Rhodes Must Fall* and subsequently gained global momentum, many of these urban placeholders have been the subject of criticism, particularly in democratic societies. The number of monuments that fell from their pedestals in Africa and Europe was relatively low, whereas the majority were toppled or removed in the United States. Wikipedia indicates that approximately 250 monuments and memorials were removed following the George Floyd protests.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this article is to examine public monuments in Bremen and Hamburg that have a connection to German colonialism and have been the focus of public criticism for some time.<sup>3</sup>

Since German reunification<sup>4</sup> in 1990, there have been numerous instances of removal and damage to monuments associated with the former East German communist dictatorship, such as statues of Lenin in various locations throughout Germany's eastern states; in contrast, I am not aware of any instances of monuments in Germany being toppled following the *Black Lives Matter* movement, apart from minor damage.

The concept of decolonial aesthetics is based on the idea of reinterpreting existing ideas in order to discourage behaviours that promote violence. This involves confronting present perceptions and practices, and encouraging a shift in perspective. This is reminiscent of the performative concepts that underpin museum didactics. One of its most prominent proponents, Ariella Azoulay, a visual culture theorist, outlined her approach in her 2019 book, *Potential History. Unlearning Imperialism*: “Un-

learning means not engaging with those relegated to the ‘past’ as ‘primary sources’ but rather as potential companions.”<sup>5</sup>

Others, such as the architectural historian Andrew Shanken, would like to *de-dramatize the monument toppling* as such.<sup>6</sup> Using the example of the toppled statue of Edward Colston in Bristol UK, they propose a social confrontation with history by re-contextualising it in a museum setting, and at the same time promote the scientification of engagement with monuments through empirical perception studies.

In this context, the concept of contested value (known as “*Streitwert*” in German), introduced by Gabriele Dolff-Bonekämper in 2010 with a view to the democratic potential of controversial monuments, can be seen as a corrective.<sup>7</sup> As an inventor at the *Berlin State Office for the Preservation of Monuments*, following the reunification of Germany she advocated for the partial preservation of buildings from recent history, including the *Berlin Wall* and *the Palace of the Republic*. These structures were met with opposition from parts of the East German public and West German politicians. However, a generation later, their significance for ongoing public discourse has become evident.<sup>8</sup>

## The Equestrian Statue of Bismarck in Bremen

Following the death of the former Imperial Chancellor Bismarck in 1898, a significant increase in the number of monuments erected in his honour was observed in Germany and its overseas territories. In Bremen, Franz Schütte, co-owner of the *German–American Petroleum Company* (which later became *ESSO*), requested the construction of a monument to Bismarck in proximity to the old town hall.<sup>9</sup> A fundraising committee was established to collect donations. However, it took additional 12 years before the bronze equestrian statue, created by the artist Adolf von Hildebrand, was inaugurated in 1910. Since that time, the Chancellor has been positioned upright on a high base constructed from rough limestone blocks. He is depicted wearing a breastplate and mounted on a powerful horse. In lieu of a commander's baton, Bismarck is depicted holding a scroll of the constitution, symbolizing the founding of the empire (in German: “*Reich*”). The statue is the only one in Germany to depict Bismarck on horseback, and was situated in proximity to other equestrian statues of kings and generals in the vicinity of the market square.

The ambivalence of Bismarck's legacy and the colonialism he initiated is still palpable in Bremen today.<sup>10</sup> Voices critical of the handling of *contaminated* monuments have become louder and louder in recent years.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, it can be assumed that the *Otto von Bismarck Foundation*, founded in 1997 by former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, has set itself the goal of honouring the statesman historically and critically in preserving his memory, which is also supported by local conservative circles.

In Bremen in 2000, an April Fool's campaign for an art exhibition, that gave Bismarck a knitted bib, a cap and a saddlecloth as the "Blue Rider", prompted a few angry letters from readers insinuating that the politician had been dishonoured.<sup>12</sup>

At the outset of the German "*Black Lives Matter*" discourse historian Christoph Cornelißen highlighted in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* that Bismarck also had other commendable qualities, and that – given his long-standing refusal to promote German colonialism – he was not an appropriate anti-colonial hate-figure.<sup>13</sup> Currently, the press is more openly expressing concerns regarding Bismarck's pivotal role in establishing the German colonial empire and his promotion of militarism.<sup>14</sup> This can also be attributed to an artistic intervention by the artist and exhibition curator Rainer Weber, who created a new approach to the memorial with a relatively simple installation, entitled "*At Eye Level*" (*Auf Augenhöhe*) (Fig. 1). For one week, by climbing a scaffold next to the monument, visitors could scan a QR code with their cell phone. This provided a bilingual audio guide with texts on Bismarck's colonial responsibil-

ity. A panel discussion was also scheduled to take place on a nearby stage, featuring activists, historians, and the author as the monument conservator. The event was well attended by a large number of people. As the action was only temporary and separate from the monument, it had no impact on the preservation of the monument.

### Competition for the Redesign of the Bismarck Monument in Hamburg

The artistic competition, held to "recontextualize" the Bismarck Monument in Hamburg's Alter Elbpark between 2022 and 2023, demonstrates the challenges associated with finding an appropriate solution in terms of decolonial aesthetics.<sup>15</sup> The monument had previously been extensively restored. For years, the base of the monument had been repeatedly covered in graffiti. If street art is seen as a form of protest, then after the restoration the neat appearance must have had an irritating effect on critical people.

The 34-metre-high statue was completed in 1906 as a giant *Roland* figure<sup>16</sup> in accordance with the plans of architect Emil Schaudt and sculptor Hugo Lederer. The statue is supported by a substantial base comprising 100 granite blocks, making it the largest statue of Bismarck (Fig. 2).

The *Hamburg Office for the Preservation of Historical Monuments* had agreed to permit modifications to the monument's protected appearance on condition that the substance was protected and the measures were reversible.<sup>17</sup> In the initial phase, the *Hamburg Historical Museums Foundation* conducted a series of workshops to gain a comprehensive understanding of the historical figure in all its complexity. In the second phase, a competition was held to attract artistic proposals. The third phase entailed evaluation of the results and forming a decision, but did not proceed as planned.<sup>18</sup>

A total of 78 submissions were received, but none were selected as the winning entry. Many of the designs were compelling in terms of their immediate content. For instance, Bismarck was reinterpreted as a tribal chief wearing an almost inconspicuous single-feather headdress<sup>19</sup> or as Darth Vader from the Hollywood *Star Wars* trilogy<sup>20</sup>; the "*Übermensch*" Bismarck was humanized with tears,<sup>21</sup> or confronted with a tiny statue of his political opponent Ludwig Windhorst.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, designs were created for enclosures, information boards, anti-colonial counter-monuments, and additions as well as light projections and entire memorials. How-



Fig. 1: Action by the artist Rainer Weber at the Bismarck Monument in Bremen. The bronze monument was erected in 1910 based on a design by Adolf von Hildebrand (31 July 2024).

ever, the majority of the proposed contextualizations were deemed inappropriate as they would involve significant deterioration of the monument.

### The former colonial memorial in Bremen.

#### Rededication and expansion of the memorial

In the period preceding the First World War, the decision was taken to create a central location to commemorate the “comrades of the Schutztruppen” who had lost their lives.<sup>23</sup> The project received the backing of the *Reich Colonial Office* and the *Reichstag*. The project was intended to be located on today’s *Bersarinplatz* in the Friedrichshain district of Berlin. Prior to the commencement of hostilities in 1914, the Munich-based sculptor Fritz Behn was selected through an artists’ competition to create a monument featuring an elephant on a pedestal.

Ultimately, the monument was instead installed in Bremen and, following a significant delay, was only completed between 1931 and 1932. (Fig. 3) In Bremen, there lingered a kind of residual unease among the Hanseatic merchants and the citizenry, who were predominantly national conservative. Despite opposition from left-wing parties, the project was only able to proceed due to the influence of moderate conservative parties on the “*commemoration of the fallen*”. The conservatives were supported by the National Socialists plus retired General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck – former commander of the “*protection force*” for East Africa and, according to today’s interpretation, a war criminal – who lived in Bremen from 1923 until his death in 1964. A street in the Schwachhausen district was named in his honour.

However, Behn’s revised design is more aligned with the brick expressionism of Bernhard Hoetger.<sup>24</sup> The result was a 10-metre-high brick sculpture of an elephant on a basement-like crypt. An altar table displayed a book containing the names of the soldiers killed in the colonies. The inscription “*To Our Colonies*” was displayed above the entrance. At a formal opening ceremony on 6 July 1932, the Senate, Bremen Chambers of Commerce, the Imperial Navy, the Naval Officers’ Corps, North German Lloyd shipping company and the colonial and warriors’ associations all laid wreaths.<sup>25</sup>

The National Socialists were able to leverage this imperial commemoration for their war plans. This was demonstrated once again in 1938, when the city sought to align itself with the National Socialist narrative by hosting a Reich Colonial Confer-



Fig. 2: Bismarck as the Hanseatic Roland in the Old Elbe Park in Hamburg. The almost 35-metre-high statue was erected between 1901 and 1906 according to plans by the architect Emil Schaudt and the sculptor Hugo Lederer (4 September 2023).

ence, thereby becoming known as the “City of the Colonies”.<sup>26</sup> This strategy was similar to that employed by other cities, such as Nuremberg, which became the “City of the Reich Party Rallies”, and Munich, which was designated the “Capital of the Movement”. Significant resources were invested in organising military parades and marches, which included veterans and soldiers, with a central event at Bremen’s Elephant Statue.

Following World War II, American military authorities ordered the removal of all inscriptions and emblems pertaining to Germany’s former colonies. It was not until the 1980s that a process of reappraising the city’s colonial history began in Bremen.<sup>27</sup> In 1986, Bremen became a member of the “*Cities Against Apartheid*” alliance.<sup>28</sup> Renewed engagement with the colonial monument was initiated through the renovation of the existing buildings. The city, as proprietor, sought to initiate renovation as early as 1987, when a critical Bremen anti-apartheid initiative stated in the daily press that it favored the monument’s preservation but rejected the concept of a “non-political restoration”. Ralf Fücks, a member



Fig. 3: Commemoration of the Battle of Ohamakari and the genocide in Namibia at the Anti-Colonial Memorial Elephant in Bremen. The monument was inaugurated in 1932 as a Reich Colonial Honour Monument based on a design by the sculptor Fritz Behn. In 2009, a memorial (foreground) made of stones from the Omaheke desert was added (11 August 2024).

of parliament from the Green Party, said: “Bremen cannot simply ignore its history. The colonial monument must be preserved as a stumbling block.”<sup>29</sup> The proposal included the installation of a memorial plaque and an artists’ competition. Following the completion of structural repairs, the sculpture was rededicated as an “anti-colonial memorial” on 18 May 1990 at a Namibia Freedom Festival (on Namibia’s independence from South Africa). The ceremony was attended by the Lord Mayor of Bremen, and a bronze plaque with a detailed inscription critical of colonialism and expressing regret was attached. Meanwhile, young trade unionists from IG Metall installed a steel plaque north of the elephant in support of human rights and against apartheid, depicting the silhouette of the African continent. Since that time, the crypt has hosted a series of exhibitions and events on colonial themes on an ongoing basis. In 1996, another bronze plaque was inaugurated in memory of the victims of German colonial rule in Namibia between 1884 and 1914, attended by the President of the Republic of Namibia, Sam Nujoma. In 2009, a memorial comprising stones from the Omaheke Desert was constructed in front of the elephant to honour the Nama and Ovaherero victims of colonial war in Namibia (1904–1908).<sup>30</sup> Since then, the genocidal warfare against the two peoples has been commemorated at this site annually on 11 August (the date of the Battle of the Waterberg in 1904).

### The “Tanzania Park” Project in Hamburg-Jenfeld: The Ongoing Search for a Concept

When the Bundeswehr’s Lettow-Vorbeck barracks in Hamburg-Jenfeld finally closed in 1999, a small part of the historic buildings around the former “*Kleiner Exerzierplatz*” (small parade ground) was placed under a preservation order and partly given to public use. The rest of the 35-hectare site was demolished and redeveloped.

The barracks were inaugurated under the Nazis in 1935 with the participation of Bremen’s former “*Schutztruppen*” commander.<sup>31</sup> Here and at two other sites, the military history of the former German colonies was to be honoured. For this reason, the buildings and barracks grounds were adorned with colonial revisionist architectural ornamentation and memorials until 1939. The buildings were decorated with ceramic relief portraits of individuals such as Hermann von Wissmann<sup>32</sup>, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and Lothar von Trotha<sup>33</sup> (colonial military commander) – today considered war criminals. The artist Walter von Ruckteschell created two large ceramic reliefs with racist themes for the gateway to the parade ground. The left panel depicts a carelessly marching platoon of African auxiliaries (known as *Askaris*) led by a local, while the right panel depicts a tightly marching platoon led by a German officer (Fig. 4). The depiction of “disorderly savages” supposedly *voluntarily* submitting to “civilization” under their German masters was entirely in keeping with the racist world view of the colonial revisionists, which the Nazis exploited in their propaganda.

The two large relief panels were apparently removed from their original location by a historical society shortly after the barracks was decommissioned, and stored.<sup>34</sup> However, another citizens’ initiative pursued a plan to create a small memorial, the so-called “Tanzania Park”, in a park-like open space. Supported by the city and the heritage authorities, the reliefs were reinstalled in a green space away from the original site. The lack of an informational context, such as explanatory panels and visual material, and the fact that the concept was developed without the involvement of Hamburg’s Black community, led to further resistance. The city took the criticism into account. Explanatory panels were installed, and in 2017 an interdisciplinary and city-wide “round table” was established with the Black and People of Colour communities, which discussed the conceptual ideas over several years. A consensus seems to have emerged to re-emphasize the spatial

connection with the former barracks and its controversial decoration. However, no further results appear to have been achieved.

In particular, the removal of the reliefs from their original location represents a clear break in the perception of the monument. This means that viewers are no longer able to intuitively grasp the spatial and therefore extremely impressive dimensions of the National Socialists' colonial revisionist propaganda in the context of the buildings. On the other hand, the objects may still be subject to political hostility and appropriation, such that the park and its objects are not freely accessible but placed behind a fence.

### Conclusion

In view of the increasing demand for structural changes to monuments, it seems important to remember that monument preservation and protection only acquired their current significance with West Germany's fundamental social democratization and co-determination processes of the 1970s. The preservation of monuments was strengthened by numerous civil rights movements and initiatives in the early 1970s, which criticized the rigorous urban development of the post-war period.<sup>35</sup> This led to a wave of modern monument protection laws and the establishment of state monument offices in the Federal Republic of Germany around 1975, the European Architectural Heritage Year. In East Germany (as in almost all communist dictatorships), in addition to the call for freedom, democracy and environmental protection, the demand to preserve the cultural and historical heritage jeopardized by the communist image of history and the economy of scarcity, as well as the dilapidated old towns, played a significant role in the Peaceful Revolution.<sup>36</sup> Today's monument protection is thus an achievement of democracy resulting from civic commitment, and not a culture of remembrance decreed by the authorities" as portrayed by both the extreme left and right of the political spectrum.<sup>37</sup> Monument protection preserves visible historical sources, without which a debate runs the



Fig. 4: Right-side relief of the German East Africa Protection Force War Memorial by the sculptor Walter von Ruckteschell, relocated to the "Tanzania Park" in Hamburg-Jenfeld with explanatory plaques (17 January 2015).

risk of being conducted without public interest (e.g., among academics) from the outset. Monument protection is therefore much more than just a guarantor of identity-creation in public spaces for citizens.

The institutions committed to the protection and preservation of historical monuments may find themselves in a dilemma here. Against the backdrop of problematic culturalist constructions of identity in society (see above), there is a danger that the mediation of monuments will also come to nothing if too little attention is paid to the value of the dispute against the background of a pluralistic and democratic social order. Successful communication of history through monuments, also in an educational sense, requires a "bone of contention" or a contentious value, whether these are the Bismarck statues, bunkers from the National Socialist era, concentration camps and prisoner-of-war camps or Soviet victory monuments. The public handling of these controversial objects should lead to a critical, professional, and adequately equipped memorial education programme, because lively discourse is vital for a pluralistic democracy.

## Figures

- 1 Achim Todenhöfer
- 2 Dirtscc (CC BY-SA 4.0 license)
- 3 Gudrun Eickelberg
- 4 Dirtscc (CC BY-SA 3.0 license)

## Endnotes

- 1 Andrew M. Shanken, *The Everyday Life of Memorials*, New York 2022.
- 2 Wikipedia, *List of Monuments and Memorials Removed During the George Floyd Protests*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_monuments\\_and\\_memorials\\_removed\\_during\\_the\\_George\\_Floyd\\_protests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_monuments_and_memorials_removed_during_the_George_Floyd_protests) (28 January 2025).
- 3 Some German press articles critical of colonial monuments come mainly from the far-left political spectrum: Wafaa Albadry, *Stürzt die Denkmäler!* in: *Deutsche Welle* (21/06/2020), <https://www.dw.com/de/kommentar-stuerzt-die-denkmaeler-um-uns-zu-entkolonialisieren/a-53865267> (02/11/2023); Holger Liebs, *Es rollen die Köpfe*, in: *Der Freitag* (18/06/2020), <https://www.freitag.de/autoren/holger-liebs/es-rollen-die-koepfe> (27/11/2023); Andreas Bohne, *Der Sturz der Kolonialdenkmäler. Zur Aktualität dekolonialen Gedenkens*, in: *Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung* (19/06/2020), <https://www.rosalux.de/news/id/42522/der-sturz-der-kolonialdenkmaeler> (02/01/2024); Dennis Rother, *Antifa: Bielefelds Bismarck-Statue muss weg*, in: *Neue Westfälische* (14/06/2020), [https://www.nw.de/lokal/bielefeld/mitte/22805178\\_Antifa-Bielefelds-Bismarck-Statue-muss-weg.html](https://www.nw.de/lokal/bielefeld/mitte/22805178_Antifa-Bielefelds-Bismarck-Statue-muss-weg.html) (29 November 2023).
- 4 Wikipedia, *German Reunification*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\\_reunification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_reunification)
- 5 Ariella Aisha Azoulay, *Potential History. Unlearning Imperialism*, London/New York 2019, cited from Julian Sverre Bauer, Maja Figge, Lisa Großmann, and Wilma Lukatsch (Ed.), *Künste dekolonisieren – ästhetische Praktiken des Lernens und Verlernens*, Bielefeld 2023, p. 15.
- 6 Shanken 2022 (See note 1), p. 350.
- 7 Gabriele Dolf-Bonekämper, *Gegenwartswerte. Für eine Erneuerung von Alois Riegls Denkmalwerttheorie*, in: Gabriele Dolf-Bonekämper (Ed.), *Der Streitwert der Denkmale*, Berlin 2021, <https://d-nb.info/1238142184/34> (05/01/2024), p. 12–23, here p. 19–21.
- 8 In this context, the exhibition “Hin und weg. Der Palast der Republik ist Gegenwart” at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin (from 17 May 2024 to 16 February 2025), which focussed on the complex conflicts surrounding the controversial architectural heritage of the second German dictatorship and the new self-image of the “Berlin Republic”. <https://www.humboldtforum.org/de/programm/laufzeitangebot/ausstellung/hin-und-weg-der-palast-der-republik-ist-gegenwart-116558/> (03/04/2025).
- 9 *The History and Art-historical Classification of the Bismarck Monument*: Wolfgang Brönner, *Das neue Rathaus in Bremen*, in: Ekkehard Mai and Jürgen Paul (Ed.), *Das Rathaus im Kaiserreich. Kunstpolitische Aspekte einer Bauaufgabe des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin 1979, p. 463–465; Beate Mielsch, *Denkmäler, Freiplastiken, Brunnen in Bremen 1800-1845*, Bremen 1980, p. 27.
- 10 Ohiniko Mawussé Toffa, *Dekoloniale Touren in Bremen – Bereich Innenstadt*, in: Senator für Kultur (Ed.), *Koloniales Erbe im Bremer Stadtraum* (2022), p. 22–32, <https://www.kultur.bremen.de/sixcms/media.php/13/Koloniales%20Erbe%20im%20Bremer%20Stadtraum.pdf> (28/01/2025).
- 11 Frank Hethey, *Erinnerungskonzept Kolonialismus. Bismarck-Denkmal im Blickpunkt*, in: *Weser-Kurier* (26/01/2021), <https://www.weser-kurier.de/bremen/erinnerungskonzept-kolonialismus-doc7es8xtjgvxucv0fehni> (28/01/2025); Lisa Urbauer et al, *Muss Bismarck weg, Herr Bolayela?* in: *Weser-Kurier* (19/01/2022), <https://www.weser-kurier.de/bremen/stadtteil-mitte/elom-bo-bolayela-bismarck-statue-in-bremen-sollte-so-nicht-bleiben-doc7ixm5eyrg6qw5w3dj2p> (28/01/2025).
- 12 *Weser-Kurier* (01/04/2000), p. 1, <https://ezeitung.weser-kurier.de/titles/weserkurier/6372/publications/56758/pages/1> (28/01/2025); Letter to the editor, *Weser-Kurier* (06/04/2000), p. 29, <https://ezeitung.weser-kurier.de/titles/weserkurier/6372/publications/56762/pages/28> (28/01/2025).
- 13 Florian Leclerc, „Denkmäler kritisch aufarbeiten, aber nicht entfernen“ (Interview with the historian Christoph Cornelißen), in: *Frankfurter Rundschau* (05/07/2020), <https://www.fr.de/frankfurt/denkmaeler-kritisch-aufarbeiten-aber-nicht-entfernen-13822570.html> (28/01/2025).
- 14 *Weser-Kurier* (22/11/2024), <https://ezeitung.weser-kurier.de/titles/weserkurier/6372/publications/176143/pages/24/articles/2161735/24/4> (28/01/2025).
- 15 Stiftung Historische Museen Hamburg, *Hamburg dekolonisieren. Bismarck neu denken*. (Presentation of the Competition Designs for the Contextualisation of the Hamburg Bismarck Monument at the Museum of Hamburg History, 26 July to 14 August 2023), Flipbook, <https://www.shmh.de/stiftung/hamburg-dekolonisieren/bismarck-neu-denken/> (28/01/2025).
- 16 Statues of the mythological figure Roland (typically with sword drawn defiantly) were erected to signify the rights of medieval towns and their increasing independence from local nobility. (In Bremen – the other case study city for this chapter – the Roland statue (erected 1404) and adjacent City Hall were designated part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004).
- 17 Stefan Kleinschulte, *Hamburg. Das Bismarck-Denkmal als Kolonialdenkmal*, in: *Die Denkmalpflege*, 2 (2023), p. 195.
- 18 Stiftung Historische Museen Hamburg 2023 (See note 15), p. 3.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 12–14.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 32–33.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 26–27.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 24–25. Ludwig Windthorst (1812 · 1891) was a politician of the Catholic Centre Party in the Kingdom of Hanover and was considered Bismarck’s intimate enemy. A parliamentarian for many years, he represented the federal interests of the German states annexed by Prussia in 1866 and Austria against Bismarck’s reactionary policies.

- 23 Heinz Gustafsson, *Namibia, Bremen und Deutschland. Ein steiniger Weg zur Freundschaft*, Delmenhorst/Berlin 2003, p. 303. Bismarck chose the euphemistic term 'Schutztruppen' (protection forces) for the protection of German colonial interests at the instigation of Hanseatic merchants such as Adolph Lüderitz (1834-1886).
- 24 The Munich sculptor Fritz Behn (1878-1970), a member of the German Colonial Society since 1911, was regarded as a specialist in African wildlife depictions. In Bremen, however, the sculptor Bernhard Hoetger (1874-1949) enjoyed great success with his Nordic-mythical expressionism, which culminated in the redesign of Böttcherstraße with the Atlantis building in 1930/31. Initially tolerated, Hoetger's art later fell out of favour with the Nazis as 'degenerate art', while Behn became the artistic darling of leading Nazis.
- 25 The Bremen Senate was dominated by national-conservative parties. Together with the NSDAP, they formed the majority in parliament. The driving force behind the establishment was the President of the Bremen Senate, Martin Donandt (1852-1937), a member of the German National People's Party (the DNVP). With the support of Paul Lettow-Vorbeck (1870-1964) - the former commander of the so-called Schutztruppe of Ost-Afrika (Occupation troops in what would later become Namibia), the trade associations and the conservative media, he pushed ahead with the project, despite opposition from the Social Democrats and Communists. Gustafson 2003 (See note 23), p. 319.
- 26 Frank Hethy, *Der Auftakt zum Völkermord. Zur Gedenkveranstaltung am Antikolonialdenkmal – Bremen und die Schlacht am Waterberg*, in: *Weser-Kurier Geschichte* (13/08/2022), <https://wkgeschichte.weser-kurier.de/der-auftakt-zum-voelkermord/> (28/01/2025).
- 27 Gustafson 2003 (See note 23), p. 382–383.
- 28 *Ibid.*, p. 375.
- 29 *Weser-Kurier* (14/10/1987), p. 18, <https://ezeitung.weser-kurier.de/titles/weserkurier/6372/publications/32892/pages/18> (28/01/2028).
- 30 Elisabeth Nöfer, *Gegen das Vergessen. Bremer Arbeiten Deutsche Kolonialgeschichte auf. Engagement für den Elefanten*, in: *Weser-Kurier* (02/07/2018), <https://ezeitung.weser-kurier.de/titles/weserkurier/6603/publications/15545/pages/4/articles/745537/4/3> (28/01/2028).
- 31 Rosa Jung, *Postkoloniale Erinnerung. Zur Aushandlung des kulturellen Gedächtnisses am Beispiel der kolonialen Denkmalanlage auf dem Gelände der ehemaligen Lettow-Vorbeck-Kaserne in Hamburg-Jenfeld* (Bachelor-Thesis, Univ. Hamburg), Hamburg 2021, <https://fiona.uni-hamburg.de/0641fe3c/postkolonialeerinnerungfinal.pdf> (28.01.2025), here: p. 15–23.
- 32 Hermann von Wissmann (1853-1905), an African explorer born in Frankfurt (Oder), founded a private army to crush the resistance of the East African coastal population against the German East Africa Association (DOAG). He also took on missions for the Belgian King Leopold II (1835-1909) from the German aristocratic family of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, who led a brutal repressive regime in the Congo.
- 33 Lothar von Trotha (1848-1920), who came from a Prussian officer's family, was commander of the occupying forces in German South-West Africa and responsible for the cruel genocide of the rebellious Herero people in 1904.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 35 Dieter Martin, Michael Krautzberger et al. (Ed.), *Handbuch Denkmalschutz und Denkmalpflege. Recht, fachliche Grundsätze, Verfahren, Finanzierung*, München 2022, p. 47.
- 36 Among others: Nils Werner, «Friede den Bruchbuden, Krieg den Beton-Köpfen». *Wie Aktivisten die Altbauviertel der DDR retteten*, in: *MDR Geschichte* (12/03/2022), <https://www.mdr.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/gegenwart/politik-gesellschaft/stadtwende-in-mitteledeutschland-dresdner-neustadt-ddr-baupolitik-100.html> (28/01/2025).
- 37 Liebs 2020 (See note 3) and Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Große Anfrage der Abgeordneten Dr. Marc Jongen, Petr Bystron, Martin Erwin Renner, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion der AfD [Alternative für Deutschland, Note from the author] – Aufarbeitung der Provenienzen von Kulturgut aus kolonialem Erbe in Museen und Sammlungen, in: *Deutscher Bundestag, 19. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 19/6539 vom 13.12.2018*, <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/065/1906539.pdf> (28/12/2023).