

Memory Processes in Imperial Lifeworlds

Object History and Decolonisation Dynamics in a Comparative European Perspective

March 18–20, 2026



Organisation: Stefan Berger (univ. Bochum), Robert Heinze (GHIP),
Klaus Oschema (GHIP), Benedikt Stuchtey (univ. Marburg)

Be they watches, tea sets, works of art in museums or statues in public spaces: things shape our everyday space and time. This is especially true for objects that originate from the entangled history of »the West« and »the rest« in global processes of colonisation and decolonisation. Objects make this past visible in the present. They create zones of contact, open up spaces for negotiation and modify historical perspectives, constantly renegotiating the relationship between the periphery and the centre. They are not only material objects, but also carriers of symbolic meanings and everyday utensils.

Our international, transdisciplinary conference addresses questions raised by the material turn concerning representation of objects, their reception, and their dynamic attributions of meaning to the past and to discourses of memory. What do objects say about decolonisation processes, and how are materiality and memory entangled in this regard? What practices of remembrance are intertwined with objects, and how do these accompany and influence the historical transformation of memories – in post-imperial states in Western Europe and in African, American, and Asian postcolonial societies? To what extent can objects be »decolonised«? What practices are necessary for this and how are they intertwined with discourses of memory (in dealing with monuments, exhibition practices, etc.)?

The event will be held in English.

No registration is required for attending in person.
To participate online, please register using the links below.

Keynote 18.03

<https://maxweberstiftung.zoom-x.de/meeting/register/VMzD3n1wQsivsW4sNCzIPA>

19.03

<https://maxweberstiftung.zoom-x.de/meeting/register/R8ymzMwhR3K8HC9gHuDUow>

20.03

<https://maxweberstiftung.zoom-x.de/meeting/register/DG88INGXsfqJPA2wj5S1nA>

■ Wednesday, March 18

17.00 Reception

17.30 Opening of the Conference

Klaus Oschema (GHIP), Welcome
Stefan Berger (univ. Bochum) and Benedikt Stuchtey (univ. Marburg), Opening
Robert Heinze (GHIP), Technicalities

18.00 Keynote

Hans Peter Hahn (univ. Frankfurt a. M.), Careers of Objects Between Cultures and Nations. Material Culture in a World of Power Asymmetries
Chair: Robert Heinze (GHIP)

20.00 Dinner

■ Thursday, March 19

9.30 Panel 1: Museum Practices and Cultural Politics

Chair: Benedikt Stuchtey (univ. Marburg)

Anne Peiter (univ. Poitiers), Museum Colonial Apologia, or not Displaying Objects. Reflections on the Federal Republic's Cultural Policy in Rwanda

Riccarda Schirmers (univ. Bochum), Reconfiguration of Symbolic Languages in Public Space. National Narratives of Resistance and Belonging in South America

Clovis Rodrigue Foutsop (univ. Dschang), Colonial Artefacts in Museum Collections in Cameroon. An Example of the Preservation of Colonial Memory

11.00 Coffee Break

11.30 Panel 2: Archived Objects

Chair: Stefan Berger (univ. Bochum)

Fabienne Chamelot (École des Chartes), When Archival Science Challenges Politics. Archives, Sovereignty and Decolonisation Processes in French West Africa, 1958–1960

Chloé Rosner (CRFJ), The Trajectory of the Archives of the British Antiquities Administration in Palestine from 1948 to the Present Day. Scientific and Political Issues

12.30 Lunch

14.00 Panel 3: Monuments as Objects

Chair: **Klaus Oschema** (GHIP)

Franck Jacquet (Sciences Po), The Elephant Fountain in Chambéry, a Physical Landmark Commemorating Savoyard Imperial History

Julie Marquet (univ. Boulogne-sur-Mer), and **Emmanuelle Sibaud** (univ. Paris Vincennes-Saint-Denis), Statues for Remembrance? A Study of the Bronze «Great Men» of the French Colonial Empire

15.00 Coffee Break

15.30 Panel 4: Everyday objects

Chair: **Robert Heinze** (GHIP)

Benoît Beucher (univ. Paris Cité), The Tribulations of a Flag in a (Post)colonial Context. Materialities and Twists and Turns in the Memory of the 1st Regiment of Senegalese Riflemen (1905 to the Present Day)

Raphaëlle Branche (univ. Paris-Nanterre), Mohamed's Watch. The Historian, the Gift, and Family Memory

Pragya Sharma (univ. Brighton), What can Warren Hastings' Gloves tell us about India's History of Hand-Knitting?

■ **Friday, March 20**

9.30 Panel 5: Media Objects

Chair: **Benedikt Stuchtey** (univ. Marburg)

Damiana Otoi (univ. Bukarest), The «San» Diorama at the Iziko South African Museum. Between Meta-Exhibitions and Purification Rituals

Clara Wilhelm (univ. Paris-Nanterre), Materiality and Memory of a Colonial Photograph. The Arrest of Zohra Drif and its Postcolonial Reappropriations (1957–2024)

Cécile Dubuis (univ. Cologne), Colonial Sound Recordings in Archives and Museums as Sensitive Heritage

11.00 Coffee Break

11.30 Panel 6: Passports as Objects

Chair: Klaus Oschema (GHIP)

Stephen Foose (univ. Marburg), Borders, Boundaries and Bureaucracy. (Imperial) British Passports and the End of Empire, 1958–1971

Vilma Vaskelaite (univ. Heidelberg), From Stranger's Plight to Owner's Pride. The Meanings of the Russian Imperial Passport Before and After 1917

12.30 Lunch

14.00 Panel 7: Restitution and Sovereignty

Chair: Stefan Berger (univ. Bochum)

Marie Julien Danga (univ. de Bertoua), Armour as Royal Symbols of Power in Colonial and Postcolonial Contexts in Cameroon (1922–2024)

Rouven Symank (FU Berlin), Afterlives of Empire, Times of Return: Restitution and the Politics of Repair

David Manolo Sailer (univ. of Applied Arts Vienna), On the Political Agency of Material Objects in Decolonisation. Materiality, Memory and Resistance

15.30 Closing of the Conference

Stefan Berger (univ. Bochum) and **Benedikt Stuchtey** (univ. Marburg)

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