

Workshop series "Recontextualising Bismarck"

Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg - Ministry of Culture and Media, Department for Museums

Workshop 1/2021 (17.06.2021)

„Bismarck. Bismarck? Who is actually being honoured here? Different perspectives on the political figure Otto von Bismarck“

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- Bunker under the Bismarck Monument could be converted into a museum:
 - + Bunker was designed for 950 people, so should have enough space for a small museum
 - + It could become a museum for the history of the German Reich: From the founding of the German Empire (under Bismarck) to colonialism and the fall under the Nazis.
- This would ensure that a protected monument, which means quite a lot to many Germans and especially to Hamburgers, also remains protected, but at the same time is used to show the course of the German Reich with all its negatives.
- This would also prevent Bismarck (or the negative consequences of his actions) from being limited to colonisation. After all, Bismarck's actions not only led to colonisation, but also influenced much within the German Empire and Europe.
- A simple plaque would not suffice and would seem infinitesimally small in contrast to the huge monument. With the museum described, this problem would be circumvented
- Despite the values that Bismarck represented, which do not correspond to the values of the present constitution of the Federal Republic, the monument is a landmark of Hamburg and for this reason, too, should not be removed or placed in a museum, but should continue to be protected and renovated.
- The entire city of Hamburg has benefited from colonisation. Colonisation is an important period in Hamburg's history as well. The topic should not be avoided or evaded, but rather deliberately addressed. In schools, in public discussions, etc. The monuments that commemorate this important period should also be left standing as a reminder of the time.
- However, there is nothing to be said against erecting monuments next to the monuments that partly glorify the time, which remind us of the bad consequences of colonisation and point them out. In this way, both sides of the time would be represented.
- Even if Bismarck did not represent the values of today's German constitution, he should be remembered, also in the form of the monument. For example, because he was the main person responsible for the founding of the German Empire (which later became the Federal Republic). Otto von Bismarck
- While there is an understanding that German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, is a monumental figure of German nationalism, and is attributed to the formation of what is today modern Germany - that is not the view that we have of him in Namibia. Yes he "disliked" colonialism and did not find it a "fruitful" pursuit, he still presided over Germany when Namibia was made a German protectorate under his rule.
- Otto von Bismarck is an overwhelmingly colonial figure not celebrated in Namibia. We are here to talk about the recontextualisation of this monumental statue honouring a

man who was instrumental in the structuring and formation of the colonial pursuit of Africa, and that is all I recognize in this.

- Why should a man who was responsible for the Partitioning of Africa, and therefore responsible for all the brutality that followed be celebrated? We must be better educated on these figures. Von Bismarck is the founding father of Modern Germany, but he is also responsible for the organization of the Berlin Conference which further subjugated and brutalized Africans. Just 6 years after his death, the Extermination Order which caused the Nama-Herero genocide, was issued. Therefore, education here is key.
- The long-term solution is better education.
- How do we deal with colonial and racist monuments? We tear them down, and place them in museums. In this case, however, the least the city can do is place markers alongside the monument, outlining the full extent of Bismarck's reign and the human cost of it.
- Today, Nama and Herero people still experience the generational trauma caused by German occupation - in order to begin the process of reckoning, the first step is acknowledgment.

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