



**Planning to Remember: Determining contested public memory at Amsterdam's
Indië-Nederland Monument and reflecting on counter-memorial spatial intervention**

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Abstract

In 1935 the van Heutsz Monument, Amsterdam was unveiled; in the sixties it was first bombed; in the eighties there was a second bombing by anti-colonial activists; in the early two thousands the monument was renamed, re-purposed, and renovated; and then, most recently in 2021, it was the venue for an inclusive ceremony in remembrance of the difficult past tying Netherlands to Indonesia. The Indië-Nederland Monument was once, and still is, a contested site of Dutch public memory that falls within the reach of spatial planning and municipal policy-making. Following an agonistic framework for counter-commemorative spatial planning and design, this research is premised on dissonant heritage, its appearance in the built environment, and the dialogical interventions available for authors of public memory to reshape the way we see memory commemorated in the city. First analyzing the site through a semiotics focused on displays of significance, authorship, and interpretation, this planner's semiotics determines the intentions behind the site, and looks into its reception amongst audiences. Then, constricted in application due to Covid-19 conditions in the winter of 2022, this research makes recommendation for, but also provides a visual prompt for, an agonistic and participatory art-based approach to dealing with the colonially significant and contentious Indië-Nederland Monument in function with Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities. Reflecting on the counter-commemorative vigilance of such an agonistic approach to planning critical remembrance reveals that an art-based co-authorship holds the potential to reframe the way people think and interact with divisive monuments and the meanings they embody.

Key words: Counter-commemorative vigilance, mnemonic community, public memorial space, dissonant heritage, semiotics, critical art

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Planning to Remember

“Remembering our past, carrying it around with us always, may be the necessary requirement for maintaining, as they say, the wholeness of the self. To ensure that the self doesn’t shrink, to see that it holds on to its volume, memories have to be watered like potted flowers, and the watering calls for regular contact with the witnesses of the past.”

- Milan Kundera (1999)

1. Introduction

Occupying an ambiguous space between mundane element of the built environment and monumental depiction of public memory and identity (Dembinska, 2010; Bellentani, 2021), memorials and monuments are complex features of the urban realm that intertwine art, public memory, and built heritage (Miles, 1997; Apaydin 2020). Clarifying the standing of memory sites in the city, Bellentani (2021) identifies four common assumptions about memorials and monuments: they are tools of political control and legitimate, markers of memory, symbols of identity, and open to myriad interpretations by diverse audiences (Bellentani, 2021, p.14). It is this final trait of the monument that is to be focal point for the following study of urban planning in response to the traces of colonial public memory in the Netherlands. Located in Amsterdam's Oud-Zuid neighbourhood, the Indië-Nederland Monument (1935) is a site of historic and contemporary political vigilance (Bijl, 2015; Scholten *et al.*, 2016; Het Parool, 2020; Caton, 2021; van Velsen, n.d.), and a significant place in the resistance to silencing memories of colonial experience.

Presenting a conceptual model for counter-commemorative spatial intervention, this research is driven by an agonistic framework for dealing with contentious monuments of colonial significance in Amsterdam. In terms of methodology, as constricted by Covid-19 conditions in the Netherlands, this study of the spatial planning of public memory in the winter of 2022 was bound to a desk, and research design was promptly adapted. Turning to semiotic analysis to fulfill the planner's obligation to "listen and learn" about subjects and objects of inquiry prior to taking action (Forester, 1999), semiotics is the focal point for this study's primary research question: *How does the Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam continue to represent a contested, Dutch public memory through urban heritage form?*

To explore the significance of the Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam, a semiotic analysis of the built environment looks for the messages embedded into the public landscape (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1995). Then, in the particular case of the Indië-Nederland Monument, described in terms of its intents, interpretations, and colonial significance, the visual presence of the monument is to be reviewed in a semiotic framework. In practice, this research follows Kramper's (2013) two primary avenues for seeing meaning in the city as it looks into the authors and audiences of a particular urban site. Critically examining signifying elements seen on site, features like its statue centrepiece popularly referred to as Mina (Dijksterhuis, 2018); its ornamental decorations; and its added built features from 2007 provide the basis to semiotics. Interpreting the allegorical and dialogical contributions of authors, the audienceship of the Indië-Nederland Monument will be qualified in terms of its cognitive, axiological, emotional, and pragmatic dimensions.

Finally, following the semiotic recitation of a visual storyline, comes a reflection on how to intervene provided the Indië-Nederland Monument's colonial significance and contentious position within the city. Confined in its implementation of socially-engaged research in early 2022, this research recommends for a participatory planning intervention – facilitated by the Amsterdam Zuid District, and rightfully performed by members of Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities – to enhance the co-authorship of the monument and pluralize its representation of the past. Adapting to constricting conditions by providing a participatory guide that could help future participants artistically intervene themselves – ideally in collaboration with others from their community and accompanied by activists – this research concludes with a recommendation and a roadmap for participatory artistic intervention on the colonially significant and popularly contested Indië-Nederland Monument.

2. Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam: Contextualizing contested memory



Figure 1: Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam (van Velsen n.d.)

In the spring of 2022, the monument at the intersection of Amsterdam’s Lyceumbrug, Apollolaan, and Olympiaplein is listed in the Dutch National Register of Monuments as *monumentnummer: 527837* (National Office for Cultural Heritage, 2021), and qualified as the “Van Heutszmonument”. Described as “a memorial to the governor general of the former Dutch East Indies, JB van Heutsz, unveiled on 15 June 1935” (*Ibid.*), this monument is now municipally designated as the Indië-Nederland Monument (Figure 1). After years of persisting protest, municipal governance took action within its realm of intervention in the early twenty-first century and did what it legislatively could to steer remembrance away from the glorification of van Heutsz, and shifted attention towards rethinking the appearances and narratives around the monument.

This leads to the first research question guiding this account of counter-memorial planning and design: (1) *How does the Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam continue to represent a contested, Dutch public memory through urban heritage form?*

According to Forest and Johnson (2002), an official public monument that is “neither glorified nor disavowed” is to be categorized as a contested one (Forest & Johnson, 2002, p.525). Therefore, a contested memory site is one that is debated and persistent in presence. One such contested site in the Netherlands is Amsterdam’s neither glorified, nor disavowed, Indië-Nederland Monument. With official ceremonies notably absent from the site’s annual programming, the Indië-Nederland Monument is both a historic and contemporary source of counter-commemorative vigilance in Amsterdam. Notably, over the years, the monument was bombed, once in 1967, and then in 1984 by anti-colonial protesters (Bijl, 2015); it was the target of the Provo Movement’s rebellions (Smits, 2021); the plaque to van Heutsz was forcibly removed and not replaced; and even van Heutsz’s own son openly criticized the monument (Buitenkunst Amsterdam n.d.; van Velsen, n.d.)

In policy recommendations, the Clingendael Institute advised local city council to counter the memory to the controversial colonial figure J. B. van Heutsz (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 2020). By 2004 the site was officially renamed the Indië-Nederland Monument, and re-designated as “a memorial in remembrance of the relationship between the Netherlands and the East Indies during the colonial period.” Recognizing the site’s controversial standing in the city, the municipal governance of Amsterdam leads the official, public resistance to self-laudatory (Wintle, 2012) appearances of Dutch colonial public memory. However, still listed as a monument to van Heutsz in the Dutch National Register of Monuments, in the national government’s eye (National Office for Cultural Heritage, 2021), the monument venerates van Heutsz and leaves an imperial imprint

on Amsterdam. As such, in contemporary times, political resistance takes aim at the site, and in its 2020 defacing, anti-colonial took action by writing “van Heutsz is alive!” (Het Parool, 2020; Figure 2) on the monument itself.



Figure 2: Van Heutsz Is Alive: Vandalized monument (Het Parool, 2020)

The original monument was built thanks to a 1924 public committee named the *Commissie tot Huldiging van de Nagedachtenis van Generaal J.B. van Heutsz* (National Office for Cultural Heritage, 2021), and significantly funded by the guilty conscience of Dutch colonial companies profiting from colonial violence. Not shying away from a complicated, contested, and controversial past, Amsterdam’s municipal movement publicly recognizes that “various companies that had profited from the violent regime in the Dutch East Indies under Van Heutsz gave so generously that once the funeral monument had been completed, there was enough money left to erect a grand memorial on the Apollolaan” (van Velsen, n.d). A source of contestation since its inception, the Indië-Nederland Monument, built in 1935, was funded by the revenues of colonial enterprise, yet was sculpted to question the colonial standing of the Netherlands in relation to

Indonesia. Sanctioned by public authority, funded by colonial revenue, and sculpted in protest, the discretely subversive intentions of the monument's sculptor and author Frits van Hall will be explored further (Figure 3). Materialized with the state and sculptor at odds, van Hall hid his political intentions in the state's glorifying remembrance of van Heutsz.

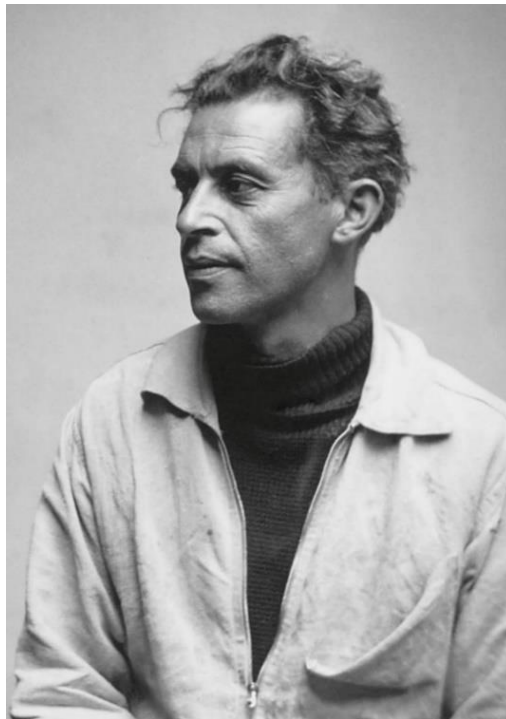


Figure 3: Frits van Hall: Indo-Dutch sculptor and resistance hero (Scholten *et al.*, 2016)

A point of dispute even before it was built, the construction was deemed controversial by the sculptors Hildo Krop and John Radecker and they refused to cooperate (Museum Het Schip, 2021). Finally, amidst controversy and disagreement, Frits van Hall – a sculptor, communist, Second World War resistance leader, and native of the East Indies (Scholten *et al.*, 2016) – would come to design the Monument van Heutsz. A dissonant place since the early to mid-twentieth century, the site is a source of conflict as some – once did, and still do – think the monument serves colonial oppression, whereas others argue it represents Dutch heroism too subtly (*Ibid.*).

As reported by van Heutsz's biographer's account (van de Loo, 2020), J.B. van Heutsz is among the most disgraced colonial figures in Dutch history. Municipal authorities of Amsterdam (van Velsen, n.d.; Buitenkunst Amsterdam, n.d.) report that Frits van Hall – the Indo-Dutch sculptor once commissioned to design the monument, but also executed by the Nazis for his heroic resistance – once stated emphatically that “Van Heutsz's presence could be removed without any problems: 'Replace it with the letters Vrijheid, Merdeka or Indonesia, and you have a Statue of Liberty' ” (Buitenkunst Amsterdam, n.d.). Historically, the memory of van Heutsz is dually idealized and vilified in the Netherlands (van de Loo, 2020; Buitenkunst Amsterdam, n.d.), and the monument(s) in his remembrance are gravitational points for anti-colonial movements (van de Loo, 2020). It is noted that at the time of van Heutsz's death, spaces in his commemoration served to incubate anti-colonial political action (van de Loo, 2020); to this day, the monument built in his honour represents a contemporary moral malaise vis-à-vis the Dutch colonial past (Poeze, 2020). Indeed, since its unveiling in 1935, the monument has been a source of tension and indignation, but also a focal point for organized and spontaneous, official and civilian political action.

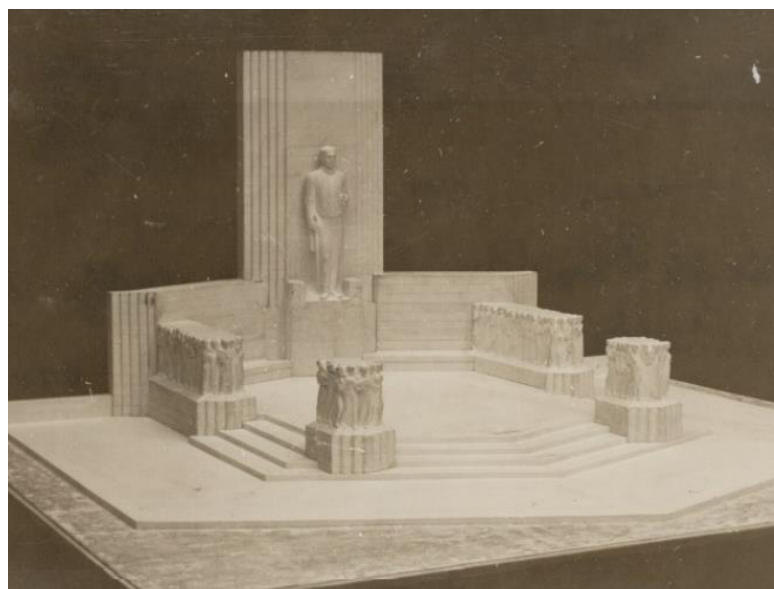


Figure 4: Design of van Heutsz Monument in Batavia (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1926)

Furthermore, memory to van Heutsz appears elsewhere in Amsterdam's public domain, as the *Rijksmonument ID: 526964* is a commemorative mausoleum on the Kruislaan, and to this day is titled the *Grafmonument van Joannes Benedictus van Heutsz* (National Office for Cultural Heritage, 2021). Moreover, van Heutsz is remembered in his hometown of Coevorden, where a statue brings his memory into the present, and prompts questions of whether his appearance belongs in the public sphere at all (van der Laan, 2020). Another prominent historic site to remember van Heutsz was the monument built in Jakarta, Indonesia (then Batavia). Built in 1932 (Figure 4), the site spawned revolutionary indignation, and was ultimately demolished once the Dutch occupants left Indonesia in the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, another portrayal of van Heutsz in the Dutch public sphere is found at the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam's 2022 exhibit *Revolusi! Indonesia Independent* (Figure 5), where hollowed portrait frames that once hung in the Dutch Governor General's Palace in Jakarta under colonial rule are displayed. The frame to van Heutsz is included, and the general is represented in a critical remembrance (*Revolusi!*).



Figure 5: Re-framing van Heutsz at *Revolusi!* (Image via author)

A prompt for counter-remembrance, representations of van Heutsz are opposed for the individual in particular, but also the colonial enterprise he personifies in general. Reminding audiences of van Heutsz's contested standing in the contemporary, this artwork catalyzes reflection and debate on the appropriate modes of commemorating the Dutch colonial imprint in Indonesia. Once a symbol for the contested memory of van Heutsz in Indonesia, but also brought to the mind of the general public today (*Revolusi!*, 2021, pp. 84-85), mementos of van Heutsz carry an enduring salience for counter-memorial practices against the generally forgetful and self-laudatory memory of Dutch colonial empire (Oostindie, 2011; Pattynama, 2012; Wintle, 2012). In the Netherlands, legacies of empire are tied into histories and embedded within the representations of the Indië-Nederland Monument itself. Meanwhile, in 2007 Dutch artist Jan Kleingeld added yellow brick pedestals both in front of and behind the monument; in a visual language, the new added features depict images of Indonesia's independence, and are a reminder of a multi-directional memory of the relationship between Indonesia and the Netherlands.

The pairing of original monument and additional elements attempts to reframe historical representation, and this dialogic juxtaposition (Stevens *et al.*, 2012) of monument and new, monumental feature(s) is to be addressed in depth in the forthcoming semiotics portion of this text. Of late, the monument continues to show a diverse memory of the Dutch past through recent political action, such as a paint bombing in 2020 (Het Parool, 2020). Then, in August 2021, a counter-memorial ceremony was organized to remember a “decolonial, inclusive Dutch East Indies commemoration” (Caton, 2021). Occurring at the Indië-Nederland Monument, the “decolonial, inclusive Dutch East Indies commemoration” (*Ibid.*) held vigil for the historic relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia – during and since the colonial period.

In consequence, the monument is an enduring venue for critical memory in Amsterdam. Shifting discourse on colonial commemoration in the Netherlands, the Indië-Nederland Monument continues to generate new forms for Dutch commemoration. Persisting as a source of social dissonance, the contested remembrance of van Heutsz and his monumental depiction shows an incongruency in Dutch public memory along colonial lines. Challenging the dominant narrative of Dutch public memory to the colonial ties with Indonesia, anti-colonial and inclusive commemorative vigilance represents the pluralism in remembrance that is burgeoning in contemporary Netherlands (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007; Pattynama, 2012). Most telling of its standing in Dutch society, the Indië-Nederland Monument was yet again the *mise-en-scène* for a pluralistic, Dutch public remembrance in 2021. Confronting a mnemonic abnegation (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014, pp.13-14) that refrains from critical historical reflection, the ceremony and the actual date represent the “recognition of often undisclosed stories and pains of various groups historically linked to the former Dutch East Indies and Indonesia” (Kartosen-Wong, 2021). This recent gathering shows the continuing political vitality of the site and reminds the wider Dutch mnemonic community to listen to the plural voices of history.

3. Planning to Remember: Memorials, monuments, dispute, and dialogic intervention

Present in urban space, memory is seen through material markers and intangible recollections, which hold importance for the continuance of historical narratives and collective identity (Halbwachs, 1992; van der Laarse *et al.*, 2014; Drozdowski *et al.*, 2016). Consequently, public memory is inculcated into streetscapes to reaffirm governing authority and concretize official, public expressions of state identity (Drozdowski *et al.*, 2014; Bellentani, 2021). Memorial sites, such as memorials and monuments, thus play a crucial role in the collective performance of public memory and state identity (Dembinska, 2010; Stevens *et al.*, 2012; Franck & Stevens, 2016). According to Bellentani (2021), within the political, geographic, and cultural scholarships surrounding the contemporary study of public memorials and monuments, there are four common assumptions of what they stand for: “1. Monuments play an important role in the definition of a uniform national memory; 2. Monuments play an important role in the definition of a uniform national identity; 3. Monuments are tools to legitimate and reinforce political power; 4. Monuments can have multiple interpretations.” (Bellentani, 2021, p.14).

In authorship, memorials and monuments are built to influence the dominant public memory by animating a visual storyline for state heritage (Franck & Stevens, 2016; Krzyżanowska, 2016). Writing the text to memorial narratives – in order to suit dominant political interests – authors of commemorative spaces powerfully shape the way in which the collective remembers the national past and its shared identity. However, in paradox, memorials and monuments are sources of diverging interpretations as they “embody a boundless set of potential meanings, each one being activated by users depending on their knowledge, evaluation and emotional reactions, as well as on the cultural, social and political context” (Bellentani, 2021, p.25).

In terms of audienceship, official memory sites prompt myriad interpretations. Embodying public memory and mnemonic regime, the city's built heritage is a divisive realm that reflects a diversity of perspectives on the shared past (Apaydin, 2020). Thus, official memory sites are susceptible to dissonance and hold a polemic function (Young, 2016): to open up public space for dissenting views of the shared past to be openly expressed, contested, and mediated. Therefore, memorials and monuments are key resources in conflict management and urban heritage transformation (Turnbridge & Ashworth, 1995; Apaydin, 2016; 2020). Monistic in official public expression, yet profoundly pluralistic in individual reception, memorials and monuments are particular points of potential social cohesion and/or conflict.

3.1 Adjacent, yet Incongruent Mnemonic Communities: A dissonant heritage

Whether it be public memorials, monuments, heritage buildings, or other commemorative elements of the built environment, memory sites articulate an account of the past by persistently reminding passersby of what once was – and visibly, what still is. Discussing the entanglement of social memory, public heritage, and memorial spaces, Apaydin (2018) notes the “construction of communities is not always built around the ethnic and political and cultural values but also values of life experiences” (Apaydin, 2018, p.4). As such, accounting for social communion through shared life experiences, Misztal (2005) qualifies social groups bound by a common capacity to remember as “mnemonic communities” that adhere to a similar account of social memory. Finding community in memory, a mnemonic grouping holds congruent understandings of the public past, as group members are conditioned to know what to remember – but also what to forget – together. Misztal (2005) goes on to note “mnemonic communities ensure that members attain a required social identity and a particular cognitive bias by introducing and familiarizing members with the groups' past” (Misztal, 2005, p. 1333). Mnemonic communities, in turn, are groupings of people

who remember together, and the social action of mnemonic community is to be defined in terms of its “commemorative vigilance” (Nora, 1989, p.19; Forest & Johnson, 2002, p.524). Thus, representing the popular actions that revitalize social memory and resist forgetting, the commemorative vigilance of mnemonic community remembers in function with *lieux de memoires* (translated from French to memory sites) held in common (Nora, 1989; Forest & Johnson, 2002). Mnemonic community accordingly exists where a social grouping forms and sustains itself through a collective, commemorative vigilance.

In *Pluralising Pasts: Heritage, identity, and place in multicultural society*, Ashworth *et al.* (2007) argue that the public expression of national heritage is a source of contention in diverse settings. Defining heritage dissonance as an incongruent conception of the shared past (Turnbridge & Ashworth, 1995), it becomes clear that within heterogenous societies, there exists a constellation of mnemonic communities divided by different recollections of a common past. Given the inter-subjectivity of public memory and the fact of myriad interpretations (Bellentani, 2021); “pasts, heritages and identities within a single society should be considered as plurals” (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007, p. 2). Notably, the “creation of any heritage actively potentially disinherits or excludes those that do not subscribe to, or are not embraced within, the terms of meaning attending that heritage” (*Ibid.*, p.37). In such instances of a plural heritage – where a social group is characterized by a variety of accounts to a common history – there is a necessary, democratic duty to manage official commemorative spaces and to pay close attention to the meanings and memories they incarnate.

As such, attempting to make a fluid matter like public memory static and uniform through built form, the policy-makers and planning practitioners responsible for managing urban heritage confront a mnemonic dissensus. Here, disagreement and dissonance are pervasive, and the possibility of ubiquitous, commemorative consensus is elusive. In turn, when dealing with heritage

dissonance, mutual recognition and the acceptance of past culpability (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1995, p. 30) help repair social bonds by a reciprocated remembrance (Dembinska, 2010, p. 317). Necessary for democracy, “collective memory is a condition for justice is based on the idea that healthy democracies acknowledge and reconcile their past pathologies and crimes so as not to repeat them, censor history, or forget victims” (Miszta, 2005, pp. 1322-23). A place to tend to the wounds of history, the built environment shapes public memory in urban heritage (Apaydin, 2020, p.13), and emerges as a venue for remembrance, conflict mediation, and cultural survival (*Ibid.*, p.18). Likewise, Franck and Stevens (2016) argue the procedures of planning and design surrounding the proliferation of memory sites are vital memory-work for societies recovering from historical trauma (p.236). Moreover, Stevens (2018) argues heritage transformation sparks disagreements, which in turn prompt “active public engagement in debates about values and identity” (Stevens, 2018, p. 271). Hence, there is commemorative vigilance, and potential for negotiation and political resistance occurring in function with the management of urban heritage features of official memorial significance.

3.1.1. Mnemonic Community: The Netherlands

Ashworth *et al.* (2007) identify the Netherlands as a historic, paradigmatic case of pillarized regime to memory and heritage. With legacies of pillarization (van Amersfoort & van Niekerk, 2006, p. 326), the Netherlands once represented an emblematic case of pillarized heritage where inter-dependent segments of society operate autonomously, yet within proximity. Originating in the Netherlands, a pillarized approach to cultural diversity is defined as a social setting where distinct groups operate adjacently, within their own spheres (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007, p.164). In this Dutch heritage context, there is a historic inclination for assimilationist approaches to cultural integration (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007, p.25; p.93) where the acceptance of difference is

merely “toleration as necessity” (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1995, p. 31). Nonetheless, with a burgeoning heterogeneity (Bosma, 2012, p. 15), pillarization in Dutch memory and heritage subsidies, and the twenty-first century Netherlands is in a partially pillarized state (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007, p.169). Due in part to resettlement from Dutch colonial territories to the Netherlands, since the mid-twentieth century (Bosma, 2012, p.8) Dutch mnemonic communities have become increasingly complex and continue to expand and diversify. As a result, there is complexity in Dutch commemoration dividing those who remember and those who choose to forget the colonial past. Further complicating matters of colonial memory are the internal distinctions within communities – such as the Indo-Dutch ones – bound to differing encounters and experiences with Dutch colonial rule.

In the Netherlands, the signs of a deeper plurality are taking shape. Differentiated by various identities, histories, and encounters with legacies of Dutch imperial hegemony (Bosma, 2012, p. 202), the matter of remembering empire and colony is a particularly divisive Dutch issue. The heritage of colonialism is complex, and when it comes to the remembrance of colonial empire, Dutch public memory is diverging, competitive, and multidirectional (van Ooijenin & Raaijmakers, 2012, p. 481). There is a common widespread failure in the Netherlands to engage in critical memory debates, and there is general avoidance of memories of colonial culpability (Pattynama, 2012, p. 176). When it comes to remembering the Dutch colonial past, there is a general, majority Dutch public memorial abnegation of issues surrounding colonial empire. Indeed, Pattynama (2012) speaks of an abnegating, “colonial amnesia” (*Ibid.*,p. 176) in that realm of public remembrance. On the other hand, Oostindie (2010) argues there is a battle *against* forgetting the colonial past in the Netherlands (Oostindie, 2010, p. 241). In the absence of a fixed,

commemorative consensus, the Netherlands represents a case of dissonant heritage where recollection of the colonial past is a source of memorial incongruence.

Within the Dutch mnemonic community, there is a pronounced, imperial fault line in public memory that drives adjacent, yet incongruent fragments of the wider Dutch mnemonic community apart: dividing those who remember the colonial past, from those who choose to forget the atrocities of Dutch colonial empire. Moreover, Pattynama then points to the work of Bosma, and notes that within the general population, there is a lack of moral indignation on the colonial issue in the Netherlands (Bosma, 2012, p. 193). In turn, manifesting as a mnemonic abnegation (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014, p. 12), the dominant account of Dutch public memory “has failed come to terms with its colonial past” (Pattynama, 2012, p. 176), and visibly avoids mnemonic contests and critical remembrance of colonial empire (van Huis, 2019, p. 215). Hence, failing to initiate discussions on colonial legacies in present-day power relations (Pattynama, 2012, p. 176.), the dominant Dutch mnemonic community identifies a “low salience of memory issues for politics” (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014, p. 12), and downplays the relevance of critically remembering colonial empire in the Netherlands.

Emerging from struggles for public recognition, memories of warfare, conflict, and Indonesia linger in Dutch society and manifest in issues of post-colonial integration (Oostindie, 2011). Notably, a barrier to acknowledging a difficult past is found in the Dutch mnemonic tradition’s historical neglect of Indo-Dutch wartime experiences. In the aftermath of the Second World War, and coinciding with the repatriation of diverse peoples from once-colonies, Dutch public remembrance failed to frame the past beyond images of Dutch national heroism (Oostindie, 2011, p.93). However, growing to be increasingly self-critical over the years, the remembrance to colonial ties between the Netherlands and Indonesia expanded as Indo-Dutch mnemonic

communities “organized and expressed its grievances and desires more openly, more space was demanded for the Indisch wartime experience” (Oostindie, 2011, p.93). Speaking up despite a general silence surrounding war and exodus (Oostindie, 2011), the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities challenge dominant public Dutch narratives on histories of violence and diversify the shared understanding of the colonial past.

On the other side of the Dutch imperial fault line, there are those who choose to resist mnemonic abnegation, and petition alternative visions of history. Such a mnemonic unit challenges the abnegation in public memory of the colonial period. There is an anti-colonial consciousness that contests fixed and static historical understandings by bringing forth alternative visions of the shared past. In such a context, the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities (of distinctly mixed Indonesian and Dutch lineage) represent a portion of society that challenges the forgetful *status quo* of Dutch public remembrance to colonial empire. Representing a diverse memory group, “over time, the shared, if internally divided, memories of the distinct groups of Indo-Dutch immigrants and their children have complemented and complicated the circuit of [Dutch] national memory culture” (Pattynama, 2012, p.184). For the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities, the task of remembering the Dutch past is complex due to intricacies in history and its collective remembrance. Dutch “public memory to the colonial past has become an intricate, contested and contradictory [...] and this complicated remembrance is inextricably linked to the memory communities and identity formations of the Indo-Dutch” (Pattynama, 2012, p.185). Therefore, despite their distinctions, the wide range of Indo-Dutch population groupings are united by a common remembrance of the Dutch-Indonesian colonial relationship, and form a cross-cutting, Indo-Dutch mnemonic communion.

In the resistance to colonial forgetting takes shape through an anti-colonial mnemonic community in the Netherlands, and people remember the painful past in opposition to the mnemonic abnegation of the dominant Dutch stream to remembrance. Putting pressure to widen the field of Dutch commemoration (Drozdowski & Birdsall, 2019, p.41) those choosing to remember the complex colonial relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia pluralize the present understanding of the shared past. Animating public memorial spaces of colonial significance with messages and memories reminding of a Dutch colonial heritage, “the Indies Monument in The Hague and the Slavery Monument in Amsterdam, where repeated commemorations take place, inform representations of the past and, for different memory communities, function as memory sites” (Pattynama, 2012, p.179). Serving as venues for commemorative vigilance, and counter-memorialization, the official Dutch commemorative spaces honouring the colonial past mark an incongruent public memory, and display dissonance in national heritage. Sites for memory, political mediation, and negotiation of historical understandings, colonial monuments in the Netherlands are emblems of dissonance.

3.1.2. Contested Commemoration: Amsterdam’s memorials and monuments

As prompts for the commemorative vigilance of mnemonic community, memorials and monuments are markers of memory, and serve to express the official public past. In the contemporary Netherlands, markings of colonial memory serve to remind of national heritage, and Amsterdam’s built memorial environment is a canvas for the Dutch imperial past. Distinctly, Amsterdam is adorned by memory markers reminding public audiences of histories and legacies of empire. In Wintle’s (2012) account of the urban form to public memory in Amsterdam, the city displays an array of monuments, memorials, and heritage building facades that are classified as “self-laudatory” and representative of a colonial Eurocentrism (Wintle, 2012, pp. 80-81). Marked

by a significant imperial imprint, Amsterdam's commemorative-built environment hosts an urban heritage that portrays the city as a centre for global commerce, colony, and empire (Wintle, 2012, p. 80; Dewulf, 2012, p. 242). Manifest at official memory sites, there exists potential for dissonance in remembrance (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1995, p. 20). As such, there has been a difficulty to frame the Netherlands, its colonial heritage, and its relationship with colonial territories in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and South America without stirring controversy, contest, and persistent resistance.

Accordingly, Dewulf (2012), relates "the erection of monuments to overcome traumas of the past and to restore or preserve public harmony and order became an Amsterdam tradition" (Dewulf, 2012, p.245). Notably, the building of the National Monument, Dam Square; Slavery Monument in Oosterpark; and the Anton de Kom Monument (Dewulf, 2012) all represent contentious sites of memory in Amsterdam. A monument showcasing incongruent memory of the relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia, the construction of the National Monument, Dam Square, saw "difficulty in including Indonesia and overseas territories in the war memorial which underlines the challenges involved in defining 'Dutchness' in post-colonial times" (Dewulf, 2012, p.242). This difficulty to define Dutchness in post-colonial times is highlighted by the twenty-first century opposition from Surinamese and Antillean communities vis-à-vis the Slavery Monument. Moreover, it is equally seen in contention surrounding the Anton de Kom Monument's imagery and power relations behind its constructions (*Ibid.*, p.247). In the case of the latter, the authorship behind the monument was a source of dissonance as a (white) Dutch artist was chosen to build the Anton de Kom Monument, instead of Henry Renfurm, the creator of *Tree of life, monument of awareness, slavery monument Surinameplein* (Buitenkunst Amsterdam, n.d.) "who enjoyed a great deal of popular support among residents in the Bijlmer, which resulted in unease

among the Surinamese community” (Dewulf, 2012, p.246). Drawing little attention from wider Dutch society (*Ibid.*, pp. 246-247), debate surrounding colonial memorials and monuments in Amsterdam demonstrates the dominance of colonial abnegation in Dutch remembrance, and also highlights the enduring presence of actively engaged, anti-colonial fragments of the Dutch mnemonic community.

Located where the Olympiaplein meets the Apollolaan, Amsterdam, the Indië-Nederland Monument is another public memorial space in the city that is the site of repeated, spontaneous and organized anti-colonial protest, and political resistance. Honouring a colonial relationship (van Velsen, n.d.) the Indië-Nederland Monument reminds the present generation of colonial heritage, and was built to honour J.B. van Heutsz, a “known military strong man in the violent colonial rule of Indonesia” (Wintle, 2012, p. 77). Municipal council followed the advice from the Clingendael Institute and chose to “open the dark pages of history” (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 2020) by removing van Heutsz’s disgraced name from the site. Proven to be a focal point for protest since its inauguration, the originally titled “van Heutsz monument had been controversial and an object of discussion even before it was unveiled in 1935” (van Velsen, n.d). Specifically, the Indië-Nederland Monument captures painful legacies of historical grievances at the hands of Dutch colonial violence and imperial conquest (Bijl, 2015, p. 187). A source of dissensus in Amsterdam’s built memorial environment, the Indië-Nederland Monument embodies the imperial fault line fragmenting the various segments Dutch public memory.

3.2. An Agonistic Terrain: Public memory sites and social disagreement

At the intersection of public memory, urban art, and state heritage, memorials and monuments occupy a particularly fuzzy position in the city. A matter of profound plurality and inter-subjectivity in audienceship, memorials and monuments are prompts to myriad memories

(Bellentani, 2021). Objective emblems of dominance, yet subjective prompts for the solitary acts of remembrance, consensus in the interpretation and understanding of monuments is an elusive ideal. A realm of dissenting opinions and interests, intervening on issues of memory presents itself as a particular challenge for traditional, consensus-driven modes of thinking about liberal democracy. Further complicating the position of memorials and monument within the collective imagination is the role of the memorial statues and monuments as public displays of urban art. Veiled by the appearance of artistic expression in the public domain, memorials and monuments are devices of social control and public articulations of hegemony, as they animate “one past out of many possible constructions” (Miles, 1997, pp. 58-60) of what has been. Notably, a source of dispute when reading urban artworks like public memorials and monuments, is the language of allegory, where storylines are hidden behind abstract, vague, or analogous images (*Ibid.*, pp.69-70). A device for cementing significance in plain sight, allegorical representations speak in a concealed tone, and deploy idealized and abstracted images to convey intended messages.

Setting the grounds for disagreement, the inter-subjectivity of memorials and monuments places them on an agonistic terrain, as they bear a polemic position within the city and society (Young, 2016). For this reason, in order to mediate memorial tensions, it is critical to turn towards agonism in democratic, conflict mediation. In the *Democratic Paradox* (2000), Mouffe declares that late-modern politics is in a state of dissensus whereby disagreement dominates, and that confronting today’s pressing issues obligates acceptance of agonistic approaches to public life. Driven by egalitarian principle (Swynegedouw, 2018, p.124), agonism refers to the process by which oppositional positions become articulated and organized as oppositional encounters between counterparts (Mouffe, 2013). In Mouffe’s view on agonistic pluralism, any consensus is conflictual (Mouffe, 2013, p. 8), and diverging views are not viewed as enemies, but rather as

interlocutors “whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question” (Mouffe, 2000, p. 101). Accordingly, traditional consensus-driven modes of democracy neglect the necessary antagonism of pluralism embedded in our social communities (Mouffe, 2013, p. 8). In this respect, Mouffe calls on democracy to govern itself through a state of amicable, mediated, and agonistic disagreement.

In turn, an urban planning and design that solidifies a public presence for agonism carries the potential to confront dissonance, and reconfigure the collective imagination of the past. Thinking like Swyngedouw, Mouffe and Zebracki, in *Designing for Difficulties*, Stevens (2018) embraces agonistic approaches to shaping public space and encourages disorderly encounters with differences because they are essential to the development of social cohesion (Stevens, 2018, p. 260). Accordingly, agonistic approaches to curating memorial environments through planning and design have the power to confront open space users with social differences (*Ibid.*, p. 261). Hence, agonistic modes of urban planning and design place the mutuality of expression in the foreground of intervention. In application, agonistic practices have the power to reframe public memory by raising the curtain on the disagreements and misunderstanding underlying dissonant heritage.

3.3. Taking the Time to Talk: Participatory urbanism, counter-memory, and dialogism

A matter of utmost inter-subjectivity and complexity, the public memory to historical trauma is an instance where urban planning theorists and practitioners need to take the necessary time to talk to the relevant communities affected by history. In such a case of complexity and fuzziness in planning, de Roo (2007) calls for the consultation of relevant actors affected by imminent intervention. Tapping into a “a deep reservoir of meaningful information, based on citizens experience and knowledge of their locale” (de Roo, 2007, p. 122), planning practices that take into account civilian knowledge help intervenors in the face of complexities. As such, when

planning the transformation of contested public memorial space, actor-consulting is an integral procedure, as “actors have their own opinions, value judgements, prejudices and assumptions, and these should be taken seriously within the planning arena” (*Ibid.*). Hence, when intervening on contentious memorials and monuments, consultation with those affected is a viable method for mediating dissenting positions in spite of differences in opinion and interest.

Planning theorist Tore Sager (1994) advocates for a dialogical approach to planning and design – a theoretical stance that finds power in the logic of dialogue. Adopting a communicative conception of political power, Sager tells us that dialogic exchange emerges as an emancipatory tool for bottom-up political organization. Contrasted with a synoptic, top-down view of spatial planning, Sager (1994) argues that incrementalistic procedure oriented towards inter-subjective dialogue makes rationality communicative (Sager, 1994, p. 4) and, accordingly, dialogical. Deliberatively engaging citizens in planning procedure, a dialogic rationality determines spatial planning decisions with mutual understanding and unforced negotiations among stakeholders as procedural cornerstones (*Ibid.*, p. 4). Following Assman’s (2015) position that public remembrance can be transformed, new memory practices ought to transform the way societies remember, “not in abolishing national memory but in rethinking and reconfiguring it along different lines” (Assman, 2015, p. 206). Sequentially, when planning to bring forth difficult public memories, planners need to enact the logic of dialogue as it is critical to initiate consultative measures, and to hear what impacted citizens have to say.

Putting into action Assman’s (2015) account of the new memory politics, contemporary counter-memorial narratives should be cherished for their agonistic reflections of the shared past, and the procedures surrounding the proliferation of counter-memory ought to be distinctly dialogic and participatory. Notably, “memorials create opportunities for participation as much for

reception, generating various ways that visitors can interact with memorials through sensual perceptual, cognitive, and physical kinds of engagement” (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p. 223). In dealing with dissonant heritage, there is “shared esteem leading to mutual association and participation” (Tunbridge & Ashworth, 1995, p. 30), as citizen involvement in procedures of public memorial intervention fosters a democratic terrain, and creates social cohesion (Misztal, 2005; Stevens & Franck, 2016). Convincingly, when dealing with contentious sites of public memory, there is value in citizen participation within dialogical approaches to counter-memorialization. In turn, with memorial contest historically and contemporarily found at the Indië-Nederland Monument, the second research question contemplates (2): *What participatory planning intervention can alter public memorial space, and spatially signify mnemonic contest in public memory to colonial empire?*

3.3.1. Dialogic Intervention: An agonistic planning and design of counter-memory

According to Kuhn (2020), consensus-driven democracies, such as the Netherlands (p.146), encounter difficulties when coming to terms with agonistic approaches to public life. Kuhn (2020) notes that turning to agonistic practice requires an acceptance that “politics in pluralist democracies lives from controversial debate and passionate contentions, including conflict” (Kuhn, 2020, p.146.). Determinately, agonistic approaches require planners to see conflict as a catalyst to social change. Thus, an agonistic planning makes venue for differing perspectives to openly confront and negotiate spatial issues and interventions (Swyngedouw, 2018; Kuhn, 2020). Nevertheless, noting a theory-practice gap, Kuhn raises concerns with agonistics saying there are issues found in its realization. Notably, a central tenet to Kuhn’s critique of agonism calls out ambiguities over the roles and responsibilities of planners, designers, and citizens in deliberation (*Ibid.*, p.147). Addressing such concern, Munthe-Kaas (2015) argues

agonistic intervention fosters “the best possible conditions for agonistic debates about the development of the city by including the voices of a variety of actors in urban space” (Munthe-Kaas, 2015, p.221). Citing the city as a place of confrontation and negotiation of otherwise diverging interests, both Swyngedouw (2018) and Vergara-Perucich (2021) argue for agonistics at scale of the city as it alleviates the tensions of co-occupation, but also, expresses democracy (Munthe-Kaas, 2015; Vergara-Perucich, 2021).

With a tendency to ignite memory, yet close debate (Mouffe, 2008, p. 154), Mouffe is particularly suspicious of public commemorative mediums, and in turn prescribes critical artistic practices, to “foment dissensus” in the public realm (Mouffe, 2007; 2008a; 2008b). Correspondingly, when intervening on public spaces, Mouffe argues that society ought to accept antagonism and is to adhere to agonistic approaches by “widening the field of artistic intervention” (Mouffe, 2013, p. 87), as art “can offer a chance for society to collectively reflect on the imaginary figures it depends on for self-understanding” (*Ibid.*, p. 88). By sparking debate around the appropriate standing of memory in society, critical artistic practice thereby empowers citizens to impact spatial outcomes (Mouffe, 2013). An agonistic planning and design can then rely on the practice of critical art to stimulate debate through participatory, collaborative, and creative effort. Intervening on contested features of the memorial-built environment, the critical artistic practices of affected community via co-design bear a subversive, political potential. Similarly, Zebracki (2012) notes a vitality in dynamic, flexible, public artwork as a spatial portrayal of open and on-going social debate.

When spatially intervening in contested and pluralistic contexts of public memory, it is critical to adhere to agonistic approaches to planning and design that do not aim to resolve conflict through forging consensus, but alternatively, wish to embrace diverging views for their egalitarian

essence. Calling for a coming to terms with agonistic approaches to public space, critical artistic interventions are vital strategy for igniting constructive debates in the city (Vergara-Perucich, 2021). Following an agonistic strategy of co-produced design, art-based spatial practice is a democratic expression (Munthe-Kaas, 2015; Vergara-Perucich, 2021). In terms of public memory space, an agonistic curation of public memorial sites re-structures sites to provoke disagreements and misunderstanding, and prompt public debate about memory, normativity, and identity (Stevens, 2018, p. 271). Mediums for ongoing debate, memorials and monuments are agonistic public spaces that socially encourage “discovery, reflection, and about values” (*Ibid.*, p.261) in relation to the suitable place of past in the present.

To rebut existing, contested features of the memorial landscape, Young (1992) informs planning theorists and practitioners that there are benefits to embracing conflicting public memories. Setting the grounds for an agonistic approach to planning and designing counter-memory, Young posits that counter-memorial approaches “critique the conventional monument’s static fixedness, bombast, self-certainty, and authoritarian didacticism” (Young, 2016, p. 6). One such counter-commemorative strategy for agonistic urban planning and design is the dialogic approach (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p. 209; Stevens, 2018, pp. 273-274), and it is also known as the *Gegendenkmal* (translated from German to signify counter-monument). By pairing existing feature with new, counter-memorial one, the dialogic coupling “dramatizes new meanings beyond those conveyed by each of the works considered individually” (Stevens *et al.*, 2012, p. 962), and represents the open contest of existing monuments.

In turn, Stevens *et al.* (2012) delineate the origins of the *Gegendenkmal*, or dialogic counter-memorial approach, as born from the West German practice of spatially managing the difficult public memories of an Imperial heritage and Nationalist Socialist memory (Stevens *et al.*,

2012, p. 962). Traced back to Hamburg's counter-memorial urban planning vis-à-vis lingering Imperial and Nazi *lieux de mémoire*, the first “built memorial explicitly labelled *Gegendenkmal* is Alfred Hrdlicka's 1985-6 *Hamburg Memorial against War and Fascism* (Figure 6), designed as a direct counter to Richard Kuohl's (1936) monument (*Ibid.*). In practice, dialogism in planning and design challenges dominant notions of public memory by “juxtaposing a counter-monumental feature to another, pre-existing monument located nearby and that critically questions the values the pre-existing monument expresses.” (Stevens *et al.*, 2012, p. 962). Hence, dialogic counter-memorialization subverts meaning through the proximate pairing of existing monument with a counter-positional feature (Hansen, 2008, p. 172), and “mocks the traditional monument's certainty of history” (Young, 1992, p. 295) by pluralizing the present appearance for the past.



Figure 6: Hrdlicka's Counter-Monument, Hamburg (Image via Liv Coakley)

Planning in the face of disagreement and complexity, agonistic planners carry roles and responsibilities as facilitators (Fischler, 2012, p.325; Munthe-Kaas, 2015; Vergara-Perucich, 2021), whereas consulted citizens are provided with the ability for authorship over plans, by means of co-design practices of social engagement (Munthe-Kaas, 2015). Offering an agonistic approach

for counter-memorial spatial intervention, Krzyżanowska (2016) identifies in *The Discourse of Counter-Monuments* that dialogic counter-monumentality offers “new ways and patterns of expression significantly different than in monumental commemorations, aim to allow for commemoration while questioning and resisting the traditional limitations of monumental remembrance” (Krzyżanowska, 2016, p. 6). Cooper-Bolam (2018) identifies the work of Stevens *et al.* (2012) as a promising planning and design strategy for counter-memorial resistance, and notes a viability in dialogical, counter-memorial approaches for the restorative justice of historically aggrieved communities. In the resistance to traditional commemoration, “coupled counter-monuments placed in critical juxtaposition to existing monuments, considered dialogic by Stevens *et al.*, can work to convey context and open up space for new interpretation and meaning” (Cooper-Bolam, 2018, p.62). Therefore, in places shaped by violence, pain, and conflict, dialogic interventions agonistically publicize disagreement with the traditional account of public memory, and via critical juxtaposition, convey new interpretations of the shared past.

Antithetically paired, the monument and its dialogical pair are concrete representations of agonism in the public domain. Providing a public spatial embodiment of Assman’s (2015) dialogic memory, counter-memorial dialogism articulates co-existing, yet conflictual visions of the shared past (Assman, 2015, p. 206). Argued by Stevens (2018), but also by Cento Bull and Clarke (2021), counter-monuments are agonistic elements of the built environment, and they openly convey memories and their counter-positions. Such an agonistic public remembrance occurs when conflicting accounts of the past openly confront and bring into question our present understandings of the contested past (Cento Bull & Hansen, 2015). Therefore, an agonistic, counter-memorial planning animates a plurality of narratives involving monuments and allows audiences to articulate their own conceptions of the shared past through collaborative and critical design practice.

3.4. Conceptual Model: An agonistic counter-memorialization

Addressing how monuments are influential and then providing a means to intervene in contest, this strategy for a counter-memorial dialogism in spatial planning and urban design can empower an affected mnemonic community to act in remedy of heritage dissonance. By bridging counter-memorial planning and design with critical artistic practices, this model turns to artistic approaches as an agonistic means viable for an anti-colonial and counter-commemorative intervention. Distinctly, this proposed approach to counter-memorial planning and design can empower the rightful people to emerge from their original roles in audience and gain authorship over the built memorial environment in a critical artistic practice (Figure 7). In turn, through co-design, this model entwines critical artwork with a counter-hegemonic memory-work, as dialogic intervention encourages encounters with differences in opinion and interest. Relating to the first research question about how a monument carries controversy, this approach takes into consideration that monuments are tools for public legitimacy and reinforce political power. Also drawing on the second research question about contested monuments, in terms of spatial planning and design, a monument's plurality of interpretations can be channeled into participatory, critical artistic intervention to produce an agonistic counter-memorialization in means and ends. Through setting a theoretical framework bringing together authors and audiences of public memory, this model for counter-remembrance intervenes on contested memory sites in function with the plurality of interpretations held by monument spectators.

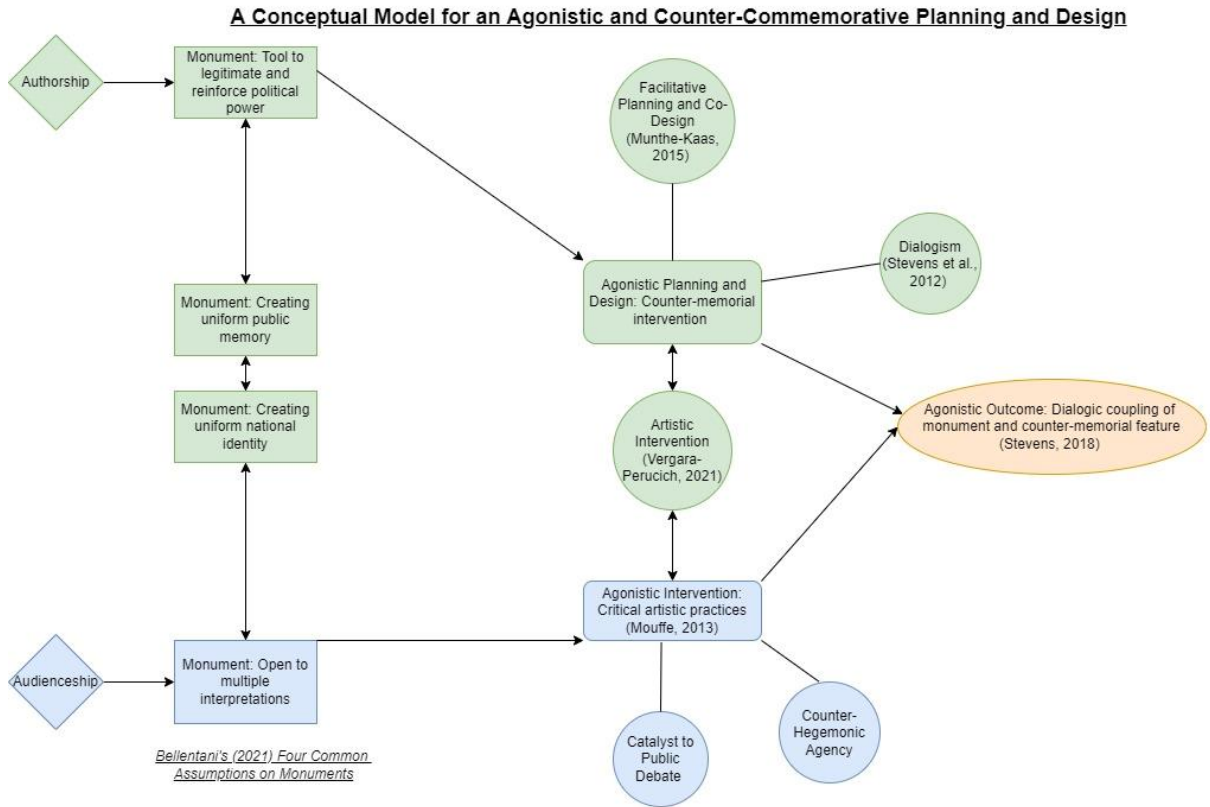


Figure 7: Conceptual Model: An agonistic counter-memorialization

4. Seeing Significance: Semiotics and the Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam



Figure 8: Monument with Plaque to van Heutsz (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1935)

To see the meanings embedded into the public memorial landscape at the colonially significant and persistently protested Indië-Nederland Monument, this study of an urban planning to public memory turns to semiotic visual methods for analysis. Putting semiotics into application on the built environment, Krampen asks “what kind of meaning is connected to the city, and by what kind of mechanisms?” (Krampen, 2013, p.1). Outlining distinct approaches to answering this question, Krampen (2013) notes two ways of studying urban semiotics: (1) by asking citizens how they classify “the city within a system of possible urban environments of which they have knowledge” (Krampen, 2013, p.5); or (2) “urban environment is seen as a projection of the conceptual schemata of its founders, planners, and designers” (*Ibid.*). In reference to the previously presented conceptual model in section 3.4, Krampen’s first audience-based approach aligns itself with one of Bellentani’s (2021) characteristics of the monument; carrying a plurality of potential

interpretations. Whereas Krampen's (2013) other author-oriented means for urban semiotics revolves around politicians, intervenors (planners, designers, artists). This method falls in line with another of Bellentani's (2021) key characteristics of the monument as an elite-controlled/top-down political artifact meant to legitimate and reinforce power.

Complicating the task of conducting socially-engaged fieldwork, the Covid-19 conditions of the winter and spring of 2022 impeded this researcher's ability to replicate Bellentani's audience-based empirical approach based in interviews, observations, and documents. As such, due to factors out of the reach of the researcher, a limit to this approach is reflected in the lack of input from audiences as the monument's mundane users are left unheard. In the absence of the ability to go in-depth into the myriad potential interpretations of the monument held users via interviews, this semiotics of the Indië-Nederland Monument focuses empirical data collection for the audience-based approach on Bellentani's latter two methods: researcher observation and document investigation that do not require consultation. The primary method for data retrieval in order to piece together the monument's audienceship follows Bellentani's (2021) impersonal collection strategies of observation, framing visual language through photographs, and documentation research. In turn, this semiotic inquiry semiotically sees the monument as a spatial planner, and recognizes the intentions of past authors, present articulations of visual vocabulary, and also delves into future possibilities for memory sites and their constituent meanings. Therefore, this research into urban planning, public memory, and semiotics focuses on the author-based approach to semiotics, yet still considers the valuable, audience-oriented approach that is studied through four dimensions: cognitive, axiological, emotional, and pragmatic.

In this context, the author-oriented semiotics is vital for planners as they determine meanings and issues in public space, but also see monuments as elite-led (Forest & Johnson, 2002)

tools of legitimacy and statements of power. Of those issues seen in the city, occasionally matters of positionality obstruct with data collection and planning intervention. In turn, taking action on the colonially significant Indië-Nederland Monument is one such case where the planner's positionality determines their role to play. In the imminent positionality and research ethics sections, these matters are addressed in-depth as they rationalize the planner's retracted, facilitative position in this anti-colonial matter of spatial planning research and intervention.

4.1 Semiotics of Monuments: Authors, intentions, audiences, and interpretations

It is impossible to pinpoint the true intentions and desires of the Indië-Nederland Monument's authors over time, yet a semiotic analysis sheds light on the presence of meanings and messages embedded in the built form to public memory. However, despite the impossibility of knowing meaning and intent with certainty, sense can be made through the conduction of a semiotic analysis of the public memorial environment. According to Turnbridge and Ashworth (1995), public spaces are deliberately coded with memorial meanings (Turnbridge & Ashworth, 1995, p. 15), and semiotics is a viable method for reading the commemorative landscape in search for heritage dissonance (*Ibid.*). As such, looking at the Indië-Nederland Monument, this study gains an understanding of the meaning, memories, and national storylines embedded into public memorial space, as semiotics provides a methodological basis for reading into the signifying aspects of urban environments (Bellentani, 2021, p.22). Consequently, providing a means to see the collective memories built into official public spaces (van der Laarse *et al.*, 2014), semiotics critically reads urban space and determines what public authorities once planned, proliferated, and now continuously manage – but also dwells on the myriad potential interpretations of audiences.

In such a way, semiotics translates public appearance into social narrative (Rose, 2007; Emmison *et al.*, 2012), and can determine the meanings inscribed into commemorative mediums.

Critically analyzing memory sites through semiotics considers that “monuments embody a boundless set of potential meanings” (Bellentani, 2021, p.25). Hence, semiotics qualifies “dialogic places” (Bellentani, 2021, p.28) where the analysis of authorship, audienceship, and visual messages contours the lines of public dialogue on a particular monument. Accounting for the “dialogicity” of meanings circulating around monuments (Bellentani & Panico, 2016, p.29), semiotics focuses specifically on the interaction of designers’ and users’ interpretations” (*Ibid.* p.29). Therefore, a semiotic analysis of the memorial-built environment ultimately disentangles memory-making processes tying together commemorative mediums, authors, and audiences of public memory.

In authorship, political elites dictate public memory by “deliberately manipulating memorials and monuments to advance political interests, and how one may interpret landscapes as a reflection of those interests” (Forest & Johnson, 2002, p.526). In erecting monuments, elites invoke symbolic vocabularies to express meaning (*Ibid.*) and, ultimately, shape built memorial form to influence reception within the social audience. As commemorative mediums, monuments are official public expressions that represent and communicate (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p.61). However, spatial texts do not “function as mere ‘communicative apparatuses’ to directly imprint meanings to readers” (Bellentani, 2021, p.28). Despite the efforts of political elite to control meanings of monuments (Stevens & Franck, 2016), “audiences can interpret and use monuments in ways that are different or even contrary to the designers’ intentions” (Bellentani, 2021, p.29). As such, when audiences are confronted with commemorative messages, they are involved in an “engaged spectatorship” (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p.140). Thus, monuments are best seen, not as static images, but as dynamic “commemorative dialogues” between authors and audiences that materially, and immaterially, present the past.

A tool for planners to see meanings encoded into official public memory sites (Belletani, 2021), an urban semiotic framework analyzes studies monuments in regard to their authors, audiences, and expressive mediums in the built environment. With two principle ways of seeing meaning in the built environment, Krampen (2013) says that semiotics can be conducted in function with either an author- or audience-based approach. Seeing a monument from two possible angles, a planner could first determine the intentions embedded by the monument's authors: an "elitist" view (Forest and Johnson, 2002) whereby the politicians and intervenors responsible for a monument's presence are the focus of inquiry (architects, planners, and artists). Otherwise, an audience-based approach to monument semiotics aims to see the emergent myriad potential meanings from a singular memory site. This latter semiotic method based on the testimony of audiences is the technique favoured by Bellentani for the study of monuments (2021); as in consultation, users communicate "opinions, beliefs and emotional reactions, describable as the cognitive, axiological and emotional dimensions" (Bellentani, 2021, p.42) of a monument's usership. Ideally, a semiotics of monument's determines a potential range of interpretations, in the personal terms of its users (*Ibid.*) and empirical inquiry focuses on audienceship.

For this semiotics of the Indië-Nederland Monument, both author and audience-driven approaches to studying the site's significance are touched upon, and account for the site's colonial significance. In this semiotic analysis from the discipline of spatial planning, the author and audience-based approaches are both explored, yet the former will be the focus of empirical data collection and analysis as the constricting conditions of Covid-19 interfered with this researcher's ability to perform socially-engaged fieldwork. The site's authorship will be accounted for in its intentional and deliberate encodings of meaning into the built environment. To do so, Amsterdam's municipal agency for Archaeology and Monuments, the Amsterdam Zuid district, and artist Jan

Kleingeld were contacted for the purpose of this research: to gain an understanding of the intent behind the site. However, none of the three would provide a comment upon request. Adjacently, the potential reception by audiences is to be examined – in a limited capacity, due to aforementioned constraining and prevailing Covid-19 conditions in the Netherlands in early 2022. In this desk-bound semiotics, observation and document analysis are to guide research into the monument's dialogicity between authors and audiences.

4.2. Positionality

In *Doing Memory Research* (2019), Drozdzewski and Birdsall call on an ethics of care when studying and intervening on sensitive matters of collective remembrance (Drozdzewski & Birdsall, 2019, p.3). Therefore, in this research into the planning interventions suitable for contested public memory sites, planners aiming to transform heritage need to carry an ethics of care. Despite the potential individual and collective benefits of a participatory research, the harms associated with artistic exercises dealing with grief and loss are worthy of attention. In such a way, researchers are responsible to implement an ethics of care when studying memory (Drozdzewski & Birdsall, 2019). Turning to Forester's ethical guidelines for planning through historical trauma and conflict, when researching and intervening on contentious issues of memory, planners ought to uphold their normative obligation to first "listen and learn" (Forester, 1999, p. 235) about the objects and subjects of inquiry, prior to acting. Hence, this memory research implements an ethics of care by subsuming to the responsibility to see, hear, and learn about site-specific knowledge prior to intervening on the Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam.

In consequence, when working with the contested Indië-Nederland Monument, the researcher behind this thesis project – a Caucasian Canadian with neither comprehension of Dutch nor the complexities of the colonial experience – is not in the position to author counter-memory,

or decide how the site is to be altered. In turn, to address a Dutch colonial issue, the researcher behind this study chooses to be an ally of the Indo-Dutch anti-colonial movement and turns to Forester's (1999) advice on planning in the face of conflict and historical trauma. Following Forester, planning researchers and practitioners (1) ought to first listen and learn about the objects and subjects of inquiry; and (2) are responsible to facilitate the participation of an affected community in emancipatory and empowering consultation (Forester, 2013). In order to be an ally of the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities, the planner behind this study commits to enact the Forester's (1999) disciplinary obligation to "listen and learn" about sites prior to intervention. To fulfill the second responsibility noted by Forester (1999), a semiotic analysis is also to be complemented with a method for collaborative intervention between the municipality and Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities.

The planning and design of public remembrance thereby follows the call for planners to operate in a facilitative capacity in the shadows of historical trauma (Forester, 1999; Forester; 2013 Munthe-Kaas, 2015). Similarly, in discussion of public memory research, Shea (2019) argues that the success of community-based research projects is contingent on the researchers being relegated to a facilitative position (Shea, 2019, p.188). Initially, this facilitative planning took shape by reaching out to activists, organizations, and Indo-Dutch community members. In these early research stages, signs were promising as an activist signalled interest in helping with a community-based participatory research (CBPR), and a group of student-participants was in the process of being finalized. In these brief interactions with potential participants, the responsibility to "listen and learn" was called upon. Specifically, one community-based organization told the planner behind this study to refrain from using the term "de-colonization" and to rather say "anti-colonial" as in their own words, colonialism is a system of domination that cannot be uprooted, but can be

directly opposed. The organization proceeded to close any further potential avenues for collaboration on the basis of this misuse of terminology. Furthermore, the mixed reception continued with some groups being indifferent to collaboration, while another instead abnegated the need to rethink the monument. Coinciding with these dismissals, Covid-19 rules restricting social contacts confined the people of the Netherlands to their homes in the winter of 2022, and from this point on, research would have to occur from behind a desk, or one-on-one at the monument itself in Amsterdam.

4.3. Research Ethics

Fraught with historical violence, culpability, social forgetfulness, dissonances, and complexities (Bosma, 2012, pp. 193-195), the public memory of the colonial relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia is personally unfamiliar to the researcher behind this study. All the same, it presents itself as a matter of utmost salience and sensitivity in contemporary discussions of memory and restorative justice in the Netherlands. A matter of utmost complexity, addressing matters of memory to colonialism in the Netherlands is especially difficult as Dutch public remembrance is multidirectional (van Ooijenin & Raaijmakers, 2012, p.481), but also fragmented along various identities, histories, and encounters with Dutch imperial hegemony (Bosma, 2012, p.202). Pattynama (2012) notes Dutch colonial monuments are particular focal points for counter-hegemonic, anti-colonial remembrance in the Netherlands. In a comparative instance, across Amsterdam at the Tropenmuseum, van Huis's (2019) analysis of alterations on public appearances to colonial memory were done in concertation with activists (van Huis, 2019, p. 243). Addressing dissonance in Dutch heritage through consultative measures, the Tropenmuseum case shows that intervention on colonial public memory ought to occur in concertation with participants and activists of the affected community.

When ethically researching and intervening on contested heritage, it is critical that those harmed by history be the ones taking present action and dictating the future of collective remembrance and its public rituals (Apaydin, 2020). As such, intervening in counter-memory requires collaboration, so that planning and design proliferate a justice-oriented process that offers citizens learning opportunities, avenues for creativity, and the capacity to shape spatial interventions (Healey, 2006). Spatial planners are obliged collaborate, as they need to tackle problems by seeing issues from “different ways of experiencing, while seeking to make sense together” (Healey, 1993, p.236). Learning from the Tropenmuseum case in Amsterdam (van Huis, 2019), an anti-colonial memory-work ought be conducted in collaboration with activists of the impacted community. Notably, planning is enriched by the presence of community activists who act as purposeful leaders, spokespersons, and mediators of potential conflicts in consultation (Sager, 2016; 2018). Representing a “deep reservoir” of citizen knowledge that planners can tap into through the collaborative procedures (de Roo, 2007), activists are intentional, politically mobilized, and carry a special place in relation to those within and exterior to the community. Acting as gate-keepers for intervenors, activists have the power to inspire, mobilize, and recruit community members to share their views (Hennink *et al.*, 2020). They also have the power to resolve Kuhn’s (2021) concern with agonistic planning’s ambiguity over mediation. Hence, in ethics, an ideal consultation of anti-colonial planning and design in the Netherlands would occur in function with activists, mediators and members of the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities.

In consequence, when intervening justice-oriented and collaborative planning and design, practice ought be collaborative and in function with the memories, experiences, intuitions, and interests of activists and group members from impacted communities. In such a case, the Indo-Dutch mnemonic community represents the group; its activists and members are best suited to

undertake the community-based research necessary to explore the Indië-Nederland Monument in depth. Discussing memory research and collaboration, Shea (2019) notes that community-based participatory research (CBPR) initiatives are participatory instances that develop resilient identities, and provide insights into shared values, worries, grievances, and aspirations for new modes of collective being (Shea, 2019, p.187). As so, CBPRs “focus on respectful engagement with communities while combining research with education and action for change” (Wilson, 2018, p.2). Therefore, channelling planning knowledge and resources towards activists and members of Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities, and in line with the conceptual model at the heart of this thesis, planners ought to facilitate the Indo-Dutch mnemonic community’s CBPR. Moreover, in the section titled *An Agonistic Exercise*, a recommendation for further work will be made; suggesting to planners and designers to enact this obligation in critical artistic practices.

Due to constraining Covid-19 conditions at the time of this research, the empirical and normative ideals of an audience-based semiotic (Bellentani, 2021), and community-based participatory (Shea, 2019) research, were not met by this project. However, adapting to limitations, the researcher finds viable alternatives to ensure empirical validity and normative effectiveness to this research. In resolution of the issue in empirical validity without community consult, the next section’s visual analysis modifies its methods for prevailing conditions. It approaches semiotics from an authorship-focus to see what the powerful actors responsible for the monument intended with its commission, proliferation, and subsequent adaptations. Secondly, in response to the otherwise unmet ethical duty of planners to facilitate the co-produced agonistic intervention in case of disagreement (Forester, 1999; Munthe-Kaas, 2015), the subsequent sixth section of this thesis proposes participatory arts as a remedy to memorial contest, and provides a consultative tool

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for future activists to lead community members through a collaborative, art-based exercise in agonistic spatial intervention.

5. The Authors and Audiences of Colonial Significance: A semiotic analysis of the Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam



Figure 9: The Indië-Nederland Monument in Profile (Image via author, March 2022)

Conducting semiotic analysis on the Indië-Nederland Monument disentangles an intricate, interpretative processes involving authors, audiences, and memory sites (Bellentani & Panico, 2016). In application, there are two principle ways of seeing (Kramper, 2013) the study of meanings embedded into built, public memorial form. As such, when critically analyzing the memorial significance of the Indië-Nederland Monument in particular, and Amsterdam in general, one can see from an author's uniform, top-down point of view, or contrastingly, like the plurality of potential interpretations held by a diverse audience. As previously mentioned in the methodology of this study, research into this monument was interrupted and constricted by Covid-19 conditions in 2022. In particular, in qualitatively studying monuments, the researcher is inextricable from the research itself and its collected results: "semiotics has acknowledged the

researcher's involvement in the collection and analysis of data" (Bellentani, 2021, p.5). In turn, the focus of this empirical, spatial planning study of public memory is the interaction between a researcher, a monument, participant observation, and work from a desk.

In order to see the meaning of the Indië-Nederland Monument, this planner's study of public memory turns to the conceptual model (see section 3.4, Conceptual Model) and to semiotic analysis to make sense of the site's discernable significance. A semiotic approach to the study of memorials and monuments "considers the meaning of monuments as always resulting from the interplay between designers' and users' interpretations" (*Ibid.*, p.33). Denoting the complex interaction between authors, audiences, and monuments, semiotics can determine "meanings users attach to monuments and connects these meanings to the real-life context in which they are produced and interpreted" (Bellentani, 2021, p.42). Expressing a "dialogicity" (Bellentani & Panico, 2016 p,29), the meanings behind monuments are found in the interplay between the imprints and intentions of those who put the monument up in the first place – those who hope to take away or add to it, and those keeping it the way it is. Hence, this semiotic analysis qualifies the monument's visual and discursive presence in terms of its author, audiences, intentions, and interpretations.

Accounting for the dialogicity of the site, semiotically analyzing official public memory site takes critical focus on the interactions between a researcher, a monument, authorship and its intentions, while also looking into audienceship and its multiplicity of potential meanings. Approaching the Indië-Nederland Monument from the view of the author, as well as from the perspective of the audience, this semiotic analysis learns from the conceptual model of this thesis how to understand the site's presence in the public domain. As seen by a politician, planner, designer, architect (Scott, 1998) and artist, monuments are significant sites and valuable political

tools for political legitimation via their marking of national identity, signifying public memory and a tool for political legitimation. Primarily, to decipher the site's authorship, the Indië-Nederland Monument is described in terms of the three monumental traits (Bellentani, 2021) found within the reach of public authority. These are finding meaning in (1) the role the monument plays in the legitimation of political power at the national and municipal level; (2) its appearance of uniform Dutch national identity; and (3) its visualization of uniform public memory.

Meanwhile, when seeing public memory sites such as the Indië-Nederland Monument from an audience perspective, monuments present themselves as stages of memory (Young, 2016); where national identities and public memories take shape and are kept vigil. Notably, monuments are open multiple interpretations, as the staging of memory can be interpreted in a plurality of ways by diverse audiences (Bellentani and Panico, 2016, p.29). In such a way, approaching the monument's dialogicity from the point of view of audiences, the cognitive, axiological, emotional, and pragmatic dimensions underline how the monument is interpreted (Bellentani, 2021). Crafted to spark critical conversation through visual composition, the van Hall-Kleingeld dialogic memorial landscape presents two important messages: explicit portrayals of a contested heritage, alongside the implicit visual language of allegory. In line with in cognitive and emotional dimensions of audienceship, the dialogic coupling of features from 1935 and 2007 explicitly signifies a pluralistic built heritage form and is potentially a painful emotional encounter for some members of the audience. Moreover, the axiological dimension of the monument relates to its allegorical visual language, and finally, the pragmatic dimension is in function with the site's monumental and mundane uses by citizens.

5.1. Authors of Intent: An imperial imprint and a dialogism

Blanco (1992) argues planners have an interpretative duty to be semioticians and read the built environment for its portrayed meanings, identify problematic representations, and review the messages encoded by their predecessors that authored the public sphere. Hence, spatial planners have the obligation to think abductively, and ultimately look for the signs of potential tension in the city (Blanco, 1992). In an urban semiotic analysis of authorship over the built memorial form, planners fulfill their duty to revise each other's work, especially in the instance of profound and prolonged conflict over a particular contentious memorial site. Therefore, semiotic analysis is yet another tool on the planner's belt, and requires today's researchers, theorists, and practitioners to review past practices. In such a way, this semiotics of the Indië-Nederland Monument searches for the signs of colonial significance by deciphering the visual storyline from above, in terms of the author(s)'s articulation(s) of Dutch public memory, but also from below, by thinking about audiences and their interpretations.



Figure 10: Frits van Hall at Work (Scholten *et al.*, 2016)

In terms of authorship, the commemorative presence is dictated by powerful public figures (Forest & Johnson, 2002; Krzyżanowska, 2016; Stevens & Franck, 2016); the people to whom they out-source work; but also protesters adding their own temporary and provocative contributions to the public memorial landscape. In a spatial planner's semiotics of monuments, an author-oriented analysis sees a site as “a projection of the conceptual schemata of its founders, planners, and designers” (Krampen, 2013, p.5), and a reflection of elite interests (Forest & Johnson, 2002). As such, the Indië-Nederland's first author is Frits van Hall (seen in Figure 10), followed by co-authors who either sanctioned the construction or edited the form of the site: politicians and heritage policy-makers at the national level, municipal managers of the built environment, and artist Jan Kleingeld who was responsible for the renovation of 2007. Also, there are several citizen contributors who damaged the site through bombings (Buitenkunst Amsterdam, n.d.) removed the plaque from the site (Bijl, 2015; Plaque seen in Figure 8), or periodically spray paint it in anti-colonial protest (Het Parool, 2020; Smits, 2021; Geneste, 2022; van Velsen, n.d.).



Figure 11: Apollolaan in 1940 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1940)

It is documented that van Hall – the Indo-Dutch sculptor commissioned by Dutch public authorities to commemorate General J.B. van Heutsz and build a monument at the intersection of

the Apollolaan and Olympiaplein – carried intent with the creation of the Indië-Nederland. Carved out by Indo-Dutch sculptor Frits van Hall, the defiant artist disregarded the desires of the Dutch public authorities who paid for the monument. Rather, van Hall followed his own political and artistic convictions, as his own expressive visual language blending European and Indonesian styles (Geneste, 2022; Buitenkunst Amsterdam, n.d.) dictated remembrance to van Heutsz, a disgraced figure of Dutch colonial history (van de Loo, 2020). With the state's and sculptor's intentions at odds from conception, van Hall's Indië-Nederland Monument articulates a provocative account of colonial commemoration and strays away from the wishes of the people who funded, commissioned, and judged the initial plans for the monument (Scholten *et al.*, 2016).

Intended by its original author to spark debate about the colonial ties between the Netherlands and Indonesia (Geneste, 2022), but also to coincide as a space conducive to anti-colonial resistance efforts (van de Loo, 2020), the Indië-Nederland Monument is a persistent venue of dissonant heritage, as intended by its defiant author Frits van Hall. In particular, van Hall's intent for the controversial monument was to design a grandiose urban feature that would remind audiences of the political struggles against domination. The intended central message of the monument was to be a grandiose ode to unity between the Netherlands and Indonesia, but also, was to represent van Hall's political indignation against, and outspoken resistance to, fascism (Scholten *et al.*, 2016, p.57). A source of controversy even prior to construction, the monument has sparked public disagreement over the rightful place for the remembrance of a disgraced colonial figure (van de Loo, 2020). Through his craft, van Hall's initial artistic intention to build a grand structure shifted as he came to terms with the political implications of a monument to van Heutsz and the colonial regime he personified.

In turn, van Hall virtuously let his political aspirations in opposition to injustice and domination in general, but also fascism in particular (Scholten *et al.*, 2016). Aiming to critically remember the Dutch colonial past through the monument to van Heutsz, van Hall set aside his artistic ambitions and focused the design on signifying a political contest. Changing his mind and his design over the course of the monument's development, van Hall's final structure was contrary to general expectations, and took presence in defiance of authority's wishes (Scholten *et al.*, 2016, p.57). Challenging the traditional forms of monumental commemoration, van Hall's anti-monumental statement evades themes of pride and heroism (*Ibid.*, p.58). Indeed, allegories of nationality, indigeneity, and femininity are intertwined within the monument's grandiose statue (Dijksterhuis, 2018) portraying a "proud female figure on a pedestal, dressed in sarong with a law scroll in hand: the personification of Dutch authority in the Dutch East Indies" (van Velsen, n.d.). Thus, van Hall presented an anti-monumentality by abstaining from traditional monumental design tendencies, and gravitating towards abstraction (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p.38). Therefore, concealing subversive political messages in plain sight, van Hall's authorship over the site articulates an (anti)monumental and critical depiction of the colonial ties unifying the Netherlands and Indonesia.

5.1.1. Co-Authoring Dutch Public Memory: The van Hall-Kleingeld dialogic in Amsterdam

Commissioned by the Dutch state (National Office for Cultural Heritage, 2021), funded by colonial regime (van Velsen, n.d.), yet distinctly sculpted with a critical intent (van de Loo, 2020; Geneste, 2022), the space designated as the Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam is an enduring reminder to a dissonant Dutch heritage. Intended to reflect on unity and the colonial relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia (Scholten *et al.*, 2016, p.60), but also to remind audiences of a controversial, culpable, and disgraced colonial figure J.B. van Heutsz (van de Loo,

2020), van Hall's monument was commissioned by Dutch authorities to honour Dutch heroism. Hyphenating eastern and western artistic styles (Scholten *et al.*, 2016; Geneste, 2022), van Hall provides an Indo-Dutch account of to the national storyline that recalls the colonial occupation of what is Indonesia today. In the end, the monument turned out to be an artistic and political statement for van Hall, where he expressed himself through his distinctive use of visual language, but also took the opportunity to reflect his beliefs and values in a sombre monumental form.

Taking authorship over the built memorial form in their own hands through defiance and open public protest, anonymous individuals and organizations (Smits, 2021) have historically revised the visual presence of the Indië-Nederland monument, and continue to do so periodically to this day. In commemorative protest, “engaged spectators” (Stevens & Franck, 2016) periodically emerge from their traditional roles in the audience. They have added their own anonymous yet explicitly meaningful political statement and edited the visual script of the Indië-Nederland monument – even if only temporarily. Offering a visual history and reciting the storylines of Dutch public memory (Smits, 2021), archival photographs offer a glimpse into intentions past, but these days also make explicit what was once meant to be conveyed through the site. Retrieved from Amsterdam's city archives (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1962), Figure 12 captures the Indonesian term *Merdeka* (translated to freedom) painted onto the monument to remind the public audiences of the violent histories interwoven with the presence of J.B. van Heutsz. Some may refer to these political gestures from 1962 as merely defacing public property, but through seeing this archived image with urban semiotics, it becomes evident those who painted political protest onto the monument emerge as authors of memory, as they edited the site's significance with a temporary and subversive display of an anti-colonial meaning.



Figure 12: Merdeka on Monument (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1962)

Revealing markers of a protested memory and a co-authorship over the site (Figure 12; Het Parool, 2020), the Indië-Nederland Monument periodically and temporarily carries the signs of an openly protested colonial significance. Another temporary image on site was any explicit portrayal of the disgraced van Heutsz, as following the removal of his plaque by “engaged spectators” (Stevens & Franck, 2016), his image was never replaced; van Heutsz’s memory was merely brought to the fore in anti-monumental representation suitable for representing a troubling past (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p.43). Generally, anti-monumentality is authored through inversion and/or absence (*Ibid.*). In this case, the latter fits – absence. None the less, anonymous contributors to the monument’s visual meaning are responsible for edits to the spatial script, instead of van Hall. Designed to honour a difficult period in Dutch history, the anti-monumentality of the site is found in its commemoration beyond heroism and honour (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p.43). The monument itself has expanded its anti-monumentality over time, as a dialogic co-authorship has edited the visuals and its intent. In time, co-authorship found creative strategies for (re)framing the past, as a new visual presence came to remind people of memories beyond heroism and honour. Come the

1990s, *Het Comité Herdenking Gevallen in Nederlands-Indië* (translated to The Commemoration Committee for the Fallen in the Dutch East Indies) requested the monument be renamed and repurposed (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 2020). Meanwhile the district conferred with organizations and individuals, yet there was dissensus over how to deal with the contested site.

In particular, dialogical intervention emerged as a counter-memorial spatial strategy for openly confronting van Hall's original monument, and thus anti-monumentally authoring "new ways and patterns of expression significantly different than in monumental commemorations, aim to allow for commemoration while questioning and resisting the traditional limitations of monumental remembrance" (Krzyżanowska, 2016, p. 6). Altering significance, the agonistic (Stevens, 2018) dialogic counter-monumental approach of critically juxtaposing a contested monument with a proximate and antithetical counter-memorial feature changes what audiences see and revises the meanings portrayed (Stevens *et al.*, 2012; Stevens & Franck, 2016; Cento Bull & Hansen, 2015; Krzyżanowska, 2016; Cento Bull & Clarke, 2021). Notably, dialogism is a strategy for anti-colonial intervention on colonially significant official memory sites in western democracies (Cooper-Bolam, 2018; Scates & Yu, 2022). Following the agonistic, dialogic turn in anti-colonial commemoration (Scates & Yu, 2022), the van Hall monument's anonymous contributors, and artist Jan Kleingeld, all co-author a dialogic *mise-en-scène* for Dutch public memory through the proximate pairing of a monument and dialogic, proximate pairings. These are intended to dramatize new meanings and proliferate fresh ways of relating to the past through adjusted urban representations of national identity and public memory (Stevens *et al.*, 2012; Forest & Johnson, 2019; Bellentani, 2021).

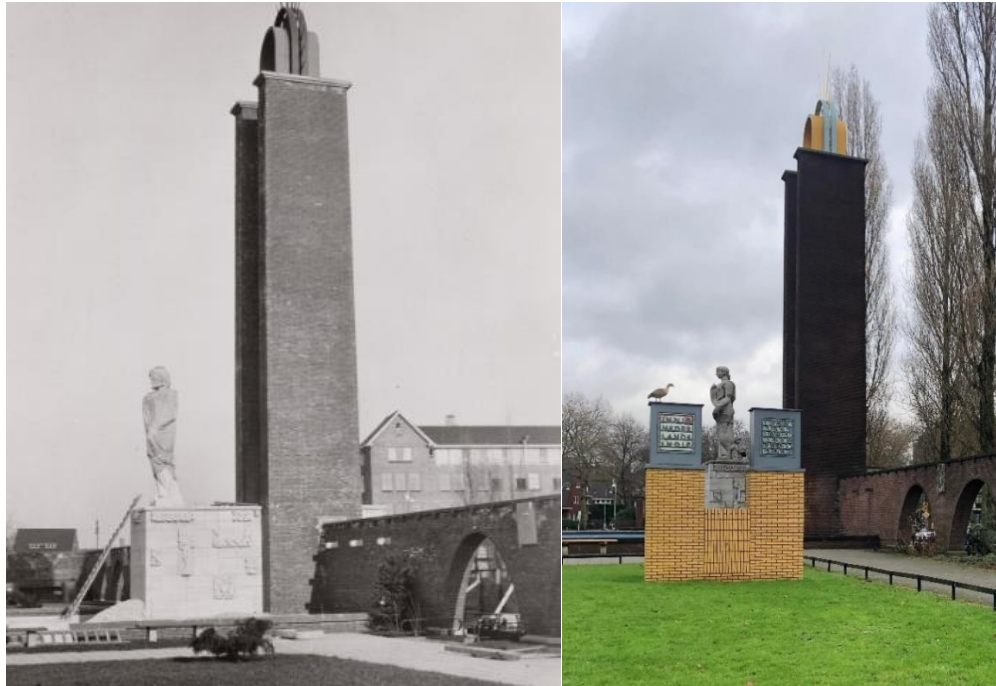


Figure 13: The Initial Monument in 1935 (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1935) in Comparison with its Dialogic *Mise-en-Scène* (right image via author, December 2021)

Requested by the Amsterdam Zuid district and executed by Jan Kleingeld, the renovations consisted of yellow features adorned by images representing Indonesian sovereignty (Buitenkunst Amsterdam, n.d.). The district's intention behind dialogic intervention was to reveal how "the monument is now a memorial to the colonial period, but also refers to the future, with respect for the Indies heritage" (Het Parool, 2007). East Indies-born journalist Peter Schumacher (2014) states that included within dialogic design of Kleingeld, are significant dates: 1596 to remind of Cornelis de Houtman's arrival in Indonesia; 1945 to indicate the Proklamasi of Soekarno; and then 1949 to symbolize the end of the Dutch colonial reign (Figure 14). Apart from the inclusion of meaningful dates, Kleingeld's additions from 2007 also exhibit "the freedom struggle and the slogan: AWAS Muslihat Musoeh, which means as much as 'Beware of enemy deception'" (Schumacher, 2014). In visual language, the site's (co)authors intended to represent a contested colonial history.



Figure 14: Significant Dates (Image via author, March 2022)

Sharing authorship over the commemorative messages emanating from the Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam Zuid's spatial intervention on site materialized a collaborative effort of changing Dutch public memory to colonial heritage by altering the urban space it occupies. Leading up to the visible and municipally-led alteration of 2007, the van Hall-Kleingeld dialogism was the focus of a collaborative effort to reframe the site and provide the Amsterdam Zuid government's own critical contribution to the Dutch public memory to the colonial past. Catalogued by the *Inventaris van het Archief van Stadsdeel Oud-Zuid* report, the city discloses the committees and studies that were conducted to impact the monument collaboratively (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2010). Noted by the district (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2010), critical remembrance

began in 1998, and over the next nine years a deliberative process was aimed at changing the monument's built presence, and in turn, to change the site's meaning and imprint in memory by reshaping the space through artistic intervention.

The van Hall-Kleingeld dialogical coupling orchestrated by Amsterdam Zuid is thus “an excellent example when it comes to how a monument can change name and content without erasing its previous meaning and associated history” (van Velsen, n.d.). Built to show unity between the Netherlands and Indonesia despite an agonizing history (Scholten *et al.*, 2016; Geneste, 2022), van Hall's authorship over the site prompts the remembrance to a difficult public memory by means of the monumental design tactic of abstraction. Meanwhile, Kleingeld's renovation in 2007 signifies a revisited public memory (van Velsen, n.d.) in the counter-monumental strategy of dialogic intervention. In Amsterdam, artists working on behalf of governments – along with protesters vandalizing with anti-colonial intent – redact the visual storyline of the contested public memory to the colonial ties binding the Netherlands and what is now Indonesia. Determining the monument's appearances – and shaping its significance for collective remembrance – the original sculptor Frits van Hall, Jan Kleingeld the second author from 2007, and temporary citizen contributions through graffiti, have all provided the audiences of Dutch public memory with a visual representation of colonial heritage via official commemorative space. Significantly, it is the recent actions of Amsterdam's local government that critically revised the monument's forms and its associated meanings.

5.2 Audienceship: A colonial storyline and ways of seeing the van Hall-Kleingeld dialogic

Quentin Stevens and Karen Franck (2016) tell us that audiences interpret monuments by noticing details in particular, and then by thinking of meaningful and intentionally-positioned memorial storylines, in general. Accordingly, to sense the meaning of the Indië-Nederland Monument, this semiotics is to place itself in the position of spectators to public memory, reflect on the visual evidence of colonial significance, and consider its implications for restorative justice within the planner's domain. As such, in terms of its audienceship, an urban semiotics approach "studies processes by which citizens classify the city within a system of possible urban environments of which they have knowledge" (Krampen, 2013, p.5). Seeing the monument from the audience's view, Bellentani (2021) provides a four-pronged semiotic understanding of the audienceship to public memorials and monuments. Therein it is qualified in terms of its cognitive, axiological, emotional, and pragmatic dimensions.



Figure 15: Monument's Dialogical Cognitive Dimension (Image via author, March 2022)

First, the cognitive dimension of the Indië-Nederland Monument is found in the audience members' understanding of portrayed ideals, events, and images (Bellentani, 2021, p.42). Discussing the visual impact of dialogism in monumental form, Krzyżanowska (2016) notes that the presence of counter-monumental features draws on a multiplicity in meaning; it thereby encourages audiences to “follow patterns of interpretation that would not be provided in case of often mono-interpretive monumental projects” (Krzyżanowska, 2016, p.7). Accordingly, dialogic pairing of van Hall and Kleingeld's spatial interventions expresses a diversity of forms, narratives, and values through its inclusion of images to Indonesia's independence (Museum Het Schip, 2021). Allowing audiences to cognize a complicate history, the dialogical display seen in Figure 15 informs those who frequent the site of multiple meanings, artworks and memorial expressions.



Figure 16: A National Allegory (Kransberg, 2009)

Second, where the cognitive dimension qualifies the knowledge that audiences hold about monuments, the axiological dimension represents the individual reception of the site. Manifest in

personal opinions and evaluations of monuments – whether positive, negative, or indifferent (Bellentani, 2021, p.42) – the monument axiological quality refers to the impression a monument leaves on interpreters. Relying on embellished, abstracted, and idealized appearances, the visual language of allegory conceals the messages of their authors, and Figure 16 shows the abstract results of a careful and intentional curation of built memorial form. In monumental design, abstraction abandons “visual depictions and conventional symbols and forms, relying on non-figurative and non-representational features” (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p.38). Accordingly, allegorical representation is an alternative commemorative language that is a popular method for designing monuments in remembrance of uncertain, conflictual, and controversial topics (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p.38). With a tendency to allegorically represent ahistorical women to implicitly celebrate national identity and steer public memory (Weresh, 2018), allegorical vocabulary intends to influence the opinions and interpretations of monuments in a tactical abstraction (Miles, 1997). Dealing with what is implicit in this case, the axiological dimension shapes opinions and interpretations through an abstracted visual communication in allegory.

Personifying the national in a feminine allegory (Dijksterhuis, 2018; van Velsen, n.d.), the Indië-Nederland monument’s female statue is the site’s centre-piece (Figure 17), and is popularly recognized as “Mien met de hondjes” (Dijksterhuis, 2018); which is translated to “Mien with the dogs,” and is in reference to Dutch woman’s name Mien (that of the 20th century Queen Wilhemina). Provoking divergent interpretations by citizens, some see the monument as a statement of oppression, while others see it too subtle in its honouring of Dutch valour (Museum Het Schip, 2021). To the frustration of the monument’s principle author Frits van Hall (Scholten *et al.*, 2016), audiences were split on the monument unveiled in 1935, and critiques arose, with some stating the female figure was ugly (*Ibid.*, p.62), that van Hall failed to honour Dutch heroics

(*Ibid.*, p.58), and some noted they could not comprehend the statue and its visual storyline (*Ibid.*, p.62). Historically leaving audiences with dissonant interpretations, allegorical language seen in Figure 17 leaves some with impressions of honour, unity, and valour, whereas others read the monument as a troubling sign of colonial heritage.



Figure 17: Allegorical Abstraction (Image via author, March 2022)

Third, carrying an endless array of potential meanings (Bellentani, 2021), the Indië-Nederland Monument has the power to provoke a diversity of potential emotional responses among heterogenous audiences. A complex dimension of monument study, the emotional element is inter-subjective and, as such, “monuments can elicit pleasant emotions or recall uncomfortable memories” (*Ibid.*). As a result, the monument can elicit painful memories due to its monumental depictions of colonial violence in Atjeh, a sensitive matter for the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities (Oostindie, 2011; Pattynama, 2012; Bijl, 2015). Showcasing potential painful images of colonial conflict in Indonesia, an ornament seen on the adjacent structure designed by architect Gijsbert Friedhoff is captured by Figure 18; it publicizes an evocative imagery that could prompt troubling emotions among Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities. A reminder of the colonial

violence conducted by J.B. van Heutsz and his Dutch forces in Atjeh, the ornamental features seen in Figure 18 depict the indices of a painful remembrance to conflict, warfare, and colonial violence.



Figure 18: Warfare and Atjeh (Image via author, March 2022)

Fourth, the pragmatic dimension to the Indië-Nederland Monument's audienceship concerns "how users act and interact within the space of monuments" (Bellentani, 2021, p.42). Through design, memorials and monuments bear a special place in the city: they are both monumental and mundane (Szunpar, 2010; Stevens and Frank, 2016). The Indië-Nederland

Monument's pragmatic dimension is accordingly two-fold: periodically, a space for political resistance, and generally, a mundane location in Amsterdam's built environment. In part, the pragmatic dimension of the space revolves around spontaneous or organized political action. As a venue for anti-colonial resistance (Bijl, 2015; Museum Het Schip, 2021; Buitenkunst Amsterdam), the Indië-Nederland Monument's defacing in 2020, along with the inclusive and decolonial commemorative ceremony of 2021 (Caton, 2021; Kartosen-Wong, 2021), show how the location continues to animate political vigilance. A persisting site of purposeful mobilization, in part, the monument's pragmatic dimension qualifies the site as an enduring venue of political activism.

In contrast with its monumental functions, Indië-Nederland Monument also carries a pragmatic dimension related to the space's mundane presence in the Oud-Zuid neighbourhood of Amsterdam for everyday citizen use. Dually monumental and mundane, sites of official public memory also carry myriad "unanticipated uses often unconnected with the people, places, and events being commemorate, and may seem disrespectful to memory" (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p.110). Leisure activities such as "picnics, games, jogging, tourism, and sunbathing" (*Ibid.*, p.111) outline possible mundane uses of public memorials and monuments where people "pass by, through, or over monuments, but their minds and bodies are focused elsewhere than remembrance" (*Ibid.*, p.112). Monitoring the choreography of visitors to a monument, researchers can observe how people circulate and interacted with the site as a means of grasping the site's mundanity through its users' tendencies (*Ibid.*, p.112). Apart from the occasional person stopping to take a photograph of the site, over the course of several weekday afternoons of observational fieldwork, the researcher noticed the site was predominately occupied by teenage students from the adjacent Amsterdams Lyceum.



Figure 19: Benches Welcoming Mundane Occupancy (Image via author, December 2021)

By design, the Indië-Nederland Monument is there to accommodate leisurely, ludic, unplanned and unanticipated uses of space, thereby integrating itself into the daily activities of people. Through fieldwork on site, it was observed that students from the nearby Lyceum would gravitate towards the two bench features discretely tucked away in alcoves on both eastern and western sides of the monument. As seen in Figure 19, the bench features welcome visitors to incorporate the site into their daily life, whether there intentionally or coincidentally. Over a series of fieldwork trips, the researcher noticed students recurringly seated at the benches hidden away on either side of the monument. The researcher observed that students gravitated towards these benches to congregate, eat lunch, smoke, and were promptly drawn back inside the school when the bell from the Lyceum rang. Bound to its surroundings, the Indië-Nederland Monument hosts a

variety of uses by the people who frequent the site. By seeing the students in action, this research then sought find out more about how students generally use this particular site.



Figure 20: Unanticipated Use (Image via Anonymous Alumni of Amsterdams Lyceum)

When approached by the researcher, the students bluntly declared the benches were ideal locations to “chill and be unseen” declined to comment further. Their non-commemorative, unanticipated, and deviant uses of the Indië-Nederland Monument observed by the researcher were not isolated to fieldwork in the winter of 2022. For example, re-occurring at the monument, students celebrating the end of exams, and in 2014, had a water of fight where police directed traffic and supervised (AT5, 2014). Then again in 2016, students used the site for non-commemorative and ludic functions when they celebrated the completion of their exams yet again. An alumni from Amsterdam Lyceum’s class of 2016 – wishing to remain anonymous – shared Figure X which depicts a student scaling the monument and holding up a Moroccan flag. Using

Planning to Remember

the Indië-Nederland Monument for its functional possibilities beyond commemoration, students from the adjacent Lyceum expose the site's mundane, pragmatic dimension in their ludic interaction with the monument as if it were any mundane and insignificant urban structure.

6. Planning to Act: Reflections on contested memory, critical art, and agonistic intervention

Neither disavowed, nor glorified (Forest & Johnson, 2002), semiotics confirms the Indië-Nederland Monument is a contested and colonially significant site of public memory. The signs of contention are found in both the way the monumental site has been dictated by its co-authors through influence, plans, designs, and reconstructions. Overall, the monument's key signifying elements are its dialogical coupling built features from 1935-2007, as well as its visual presence for allegory included on site since its unveiling. In terms of audienceship, the van Hall-Kleingeld dialogic comprised of memorial features from 1935 and 2007 provides spectators with an explicit understanding of a shared colonial heritage between the Netherlands and Indonesia. The dialogic provides a visible representation for practical difficulties that surround the construction of monuments on painful topics of public remembrance. In audienceship, the emotional dimension of the monument is equally provoked by this dialogical pairing, as both the structures of van Hall and Kleingeld comprise visuals of colonial lineage, but Kleingeld's 2007 renovations show visuals of anti-colonial struggle and of Indonesian sovereignty. The spectators' interpretations of the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities are salient and worthy of particular attention in regard to the potentially distressing emotional dimension of the site's audienceship.

Van Hall's inclusion of scenes of warfare, and Kleingeld's visuals for anti-colonial resistance in Indonesia, are the monument's signifying elements most likely to prompt painful recollection from Indo-Dutch mnemonic audiences. Apart from what is explicit in the monument, there is an implicit visual language that has proved influential over audiences with the passage of time. Notably, van Hall's Mina, the abstracted feminine statue and centrepiece, delves into allegory; it enhances the monument's polemic function (Young, 2016) through the portrayal of ambiguity and ahistorical/non-representational images. Seen with Mina, but also in the series of

other ornamental images along the adjacent structure (one of which is seen in Figure 21), van Hall turned to the commemorative strategy of abstraction – a design tactic typical for the remembrance of contested and controversial pasts that are difficult to frame within public space (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p.38). However, as proven in the initial polarized reception of the monument, the turn towards implicit, allegorical, and abstracted images historically caused dissensus among audiences; consensus over the site’s meanings and memories is increasingly elusive. Since then, with the inclusion of a dialogical coupling in 2007, co-authorship over the site has expanded as the Amsterdam Zuid borough has emerged as the site’s primary curator and redactor of the *visualj* storyline.



Figure 21: Allegorical Scene (Image via author, March 2022)

This account of planning to (critically) remember now pivots from a semiotic analysis towards a recommendation for participatory and artistic planning and design intervention on the Indië-Nederland Monument. Turning to the agonistic model for counter-commemorative spatial intervention presented in section 3.4, this planner's semiotics has listened and learned about the contestation of the colonially significant Indië-Nederland Monument: it now pivots towards an obligation to facilitate the co-produced counter-memorial spatial intervention called for in academic literature on restorative justice and memorial planning. Nevertheless, the previously mentioned Covid-19 legal, social, and health conditions of winter 2022, which constrained this semiotics of the Indië-Nederland Monument, also impeded any attempt at fulfilling this obligation to co-produce a counter-memorial design in tandem. In turn, adjusting to constrained research conditions, this account of planning to remember colonial significance at the Indië-Nederland Monument turns to a recommendation for community-based, agonistic, and artistic intervention.

Drawing on the concepts underlying the agonistic counter-memorial model and the results of semiotics, this reflection into solutions for an issue in Dutch public memory of the colonial ties with Indonesia finds common ground in art. Converging through artistic methods, the facilitative planning and design of public authority can collaborate with impacted citizens through a participatory art-based intervention aimed at co-producing an agonistic and dialogical planning and design intervention. Calling for collaboration between those managing the monument's authorship (the Amsterdam Zuid district government), and those most significantly impacted by the site's meaning and visual presence (the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities), a critical artistic practice aimed at imagining the monument otherwise through dialogical intervention could share authorship beyond the existing van Hall-Kleingeld.

The reflections that follow will identify that Amsterdam Zuid is best placed to facilitate a community-based participatory research (CBPR) among members of Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities. They will also advise that these consultations occur through artistic practices, as artistic interventions in spatial planning are viable tools critical in revisiting memory through a dually pluralistic and reflective practice. With the municipality's three vertical crosses emblem inscribed into the monument's original feature by van Hall, Amsterdam's local government is symbolically (Figure 22) and materially responsible for curating the site's visuals and meanings. Hence, to carry the Indië-Nederland Monument into the future, the next step requires the participation of Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities in an art-based CBPR to ensure that authorship over the site remains in the hands of those most deeply impacted by its painful commemoration. The following section will examine the challenges that face the municipality in agonistic and counter-memorial intervention.



Figure 22: Majesty and Municipality (Image via author, March 2022)

6.1. Planning the Past: Municipally fitting into public policy

Obstacles exist in the implementation of this proposed method for artistic intervention on the Indië-Nederland Monument. These obstacles arise when fitting into the public policy arrangements that govern the built heritage form. On one side, the state is responsible to curate spaces for national identity, and contrarily, there is a municipal duty to manage commemorative urban spaces and deal with their mundane, practical dimensions such as maintenance and local zoning. Generally speaking, the mandates of state heritage and municipal management are abutting and complicate the task of acting on a colonial and contested site. Managing built heritage in the Netherlands, the national Cultural Heritage Agency outlines in their *Heritage Act 2016* that state authority reiterates a commitment to “conservation and management of Dutch heritage” (Cultural Heritage Agency, 2016), and its governance occurs through specific acts and sets of regulations.

Notably, the act of 2016 declares an integration of heritage policies and states that “provisions applying to monuments are being gradually transferred from the *Monuments and Historic Planning to Remember 59 Buildings Act 1988* to the *Environmental and Planning Act*” (Cultural Heritage Agency, 2016, p.42). Signalling a shift in heritage management, state policies on monumental heritage aim for integration and seek to overcome fragmentation. Moreover, they also signal a changing tide, and note an increasing importance placed on spatial planning in the management of Dutch heritage – notably in regard to monuments. Given the policy shift in favour of a planner’s management of monuments, this reflection contends that intervention on the Indië-Nederland Monument ought to shy away from the realm of national, state heritage and legitimate action is to be found in a local, municipal solution. Argued by Ashworth *et al.*, (2007), the Netherlands is exemplary for an effective governance of heritage by empowering local authorities to act on heritage sites (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007, pp. 64-65). In particular, section 3.16 of the *Heritage*

Act 2016 reserves for municipal governments the right to intervene on heritage elements that are culturally, historically, and or scholarly significant to the corresponding municipality (Cultural Heritage Agency, 2016, p.11). The municipal government of Amsterdam is accordingly granted the capacity to intervene with respect to colonial and contested public memory at the Indië-Nederland Monument.

Providing municipal avenues for citizen participation in the governance of Amsterdam, the *General Participation Regulation (2016)* states a public commitment to participatory democracy that actively engages citizens in municipal management (Gemeenteraad Amsterdam, 2016). Notably, Amsterdam's municipal governance empowers resident mobilization by providing subsidies for citizen initiative and identifies the district level as the primary point for contact between citizens and the city (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.). In making it easier for citizens to participate in Amsterdam's municipal governance and urban planning, there is promise for citizen engagement through at the district level. Moreover, apart from its jurisdictional capacity to intervene, the Amsterdam Zuid borough – through its critical revisions of the site since 1998 – ought to keep up their critical memory-work, as well as turn towards a community-based and participatory method to enhance the theoretical strength and normative validity in intervention.

6.2 An Agonistic Turn in Dutch Colonial Remembrance: Dialogic and artistic spatial intervention

Determined via semiotic analysis, the colonial significance of the monument stands out and reminds the present of the divisive past tying the Netherlands and Indonesia. Recommending the walking tour, group discussion, and creative workshop format of art-based research and intervention (van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018a), the participatory guide that ensues facilitates a counter-memorialization of the Indië-Nederland Monument, while engaging with a rightful group: the

impacted Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities. A potential medium for the creative expression of ideas pertaining anti-colonial, counter-memorial interventions on the Indië-Nederland Monument, this proposal for community-based, artistic approaches of participatory planning and design would untangle the intricacies of counter-commemoration in creative means. Moreover, to see the latent political power of art in an agonistic public realm of dissenting perspectives, we should “visualize artistic resistance as agonistic interventions within the subversive context of counter-hegemony” (*Ibid.*). Accessible to citizens, the practice of artistic intervention (Mouffe, 2013; Vergara-Perucich, 2021) is a spatial science method that places power in the hands and imaginations of participants.

In practice, art-makers explore “knowing and meaning in ways that are more visceral and interactive than the intellectual and verbal” (Greenwood, 2019). In consequence, art is social process and bridges theory and practice (Miles, 1997, p. 176). Artistic interventions therefore carry the potential to derive data that are “multi-sensory, multifaceted, and related in complex ways to time, space, ideologies, and relationships with others” (Greenwood, 2019). A participatory and synergistic practice, art-based methods of research and intervention on memorials and monuments are thus a powerful display of collective, counter-memorial expression. Identifying a procedure capable of stimulating creativity and counter-memorial imagination, this research points to art-based methods of CBPR to both impact representations in space and, at the same time, catalyze social change. Critically, planning and memory scholarship point to a common trend: a democratic value in a facilitative practice (Forester, 1999; 2013; Munthe-Kaas, 2015; Horlings *et al.*, 2021) and a participatory co-design for those aggrieved in history (Munthe-Kaas, 2015; Sager, 2016; Stevens & Franck, 2016; Apaydin, 2020).

This proposal for critical art in remembrance extends the scope of intervention beyond the individual in isolation and impacts the wider society in memory. According to van der Vaart *et al.*, (2018a), “creative and arts-based research methods are appropriate for participatory, community-based and action research” (p.7). Artistic intervention empowers creativity and stimulates collective action through dialogue and art-work (van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018b, p. 190). An agonistic and artistic method for imagining the Indië-Nederland Monument otherwise, this proposal of community-based, critical artistic practices carries transformative potential in a participatory planning and design. Resolving two of Kuhn’s issues with agnostic planning, artistic intervention clarifies roles in mediation and methods for implementation (Kuhn, 2020), as agonistic counter-commemoration ought to learn from Mouffe’s critical art (Cento-Bull & Clarke, 2021).

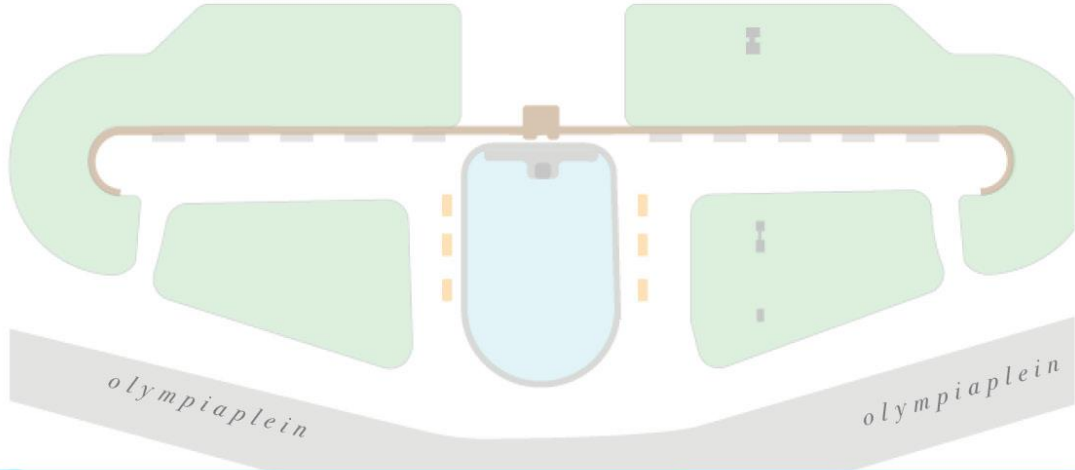
This call for an artistic and agonistic intervention enacts the memorial planner’s facilitative contribution to dissonant heritage transformation in the Netherlands and aims to share authorship. Significantly, artistic intervention is resistance for aggrieved groups and highlights the viability of dialogism intervention: there are curative qualities and restorative justice in dialogical approaches to counter-memory (Cooper-Bolam, 2018; Cento-Bull & Clarke, 2021). Hence, countering domination, public interventions on disputed memory space should unfold through critical artistic practices aimed at fostering new forms of counter-hegemonic identification (Mouffe, 2013, p. 90). To facilitate the collaborative planning and co-production of an agonistic and dialogic memory on the topic of counter-commemorating the colonial past, a participatory guide is presented in Figure 23. If followed, this tool could share authorship over the site if Indo-Dutch communities follow the proposed steps of walking, talking, and creating as a means for thinking critically about the monument, its meanings and its memories, and follow in the anti-monumental footsteps of van Hall himself and Jan Kleingeld thereafter.

Planning to Remember

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In step one of consultation, please trace your walk of the site, and mark with "X" the locations where photographs of significance are taken.

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Icon of Colonial History



Index of Colonial Violence



Symbol of the Nation



Hamburg: original dialogic



Budapest: Dialogic Intervention (Eröss, 2018)



Montreal: The Swing (CCA, 2021)

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With the site's memorial meaning in mind, and knowing the potential of dialogic interventions for counter-memory elsewhere in the world, how do you think a counter-memorial could take shape at the Indië-Nederland Monument?

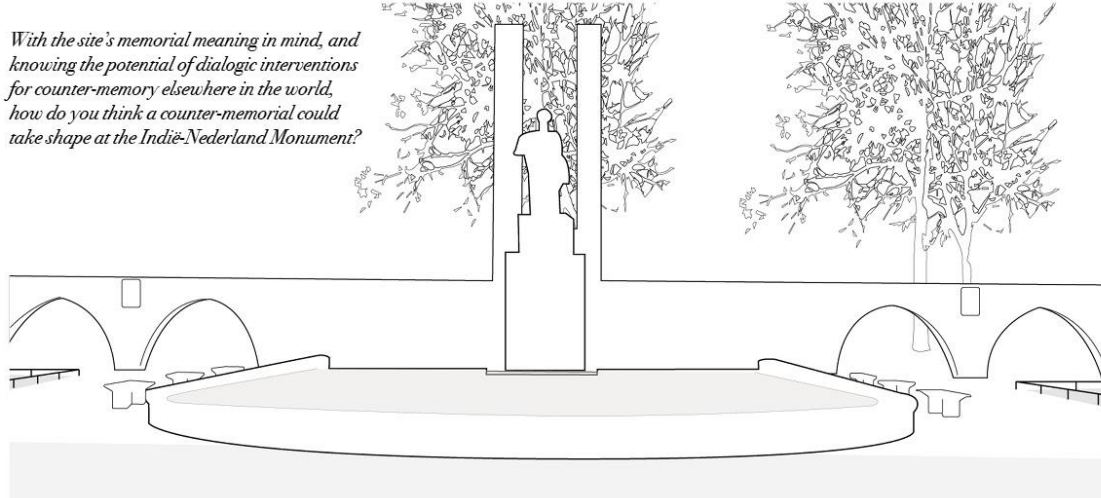


Figure 23: Guide for Arts-Based Participation (Rendering via designer Trae Gallemit-Fraser)

6.2.1. *Walking: Sensing significance*

This proposal of art-based CBPR – applied in the walk, talk, and create model – allows for participants from Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities to critically remember the Dutch colonial past by re-imagining new horizons for the Indië-Nederland Monument. In application, the art-based engagement of Indo-Dutch communities, as mediated by an activist, would enlist six group members, and unite a total of seven participants; this would represent an ideal size for group discussion (Hennink *et al.*, 2020, p. 155) and be crucial in the second, group discussion step of participatory art. Initiating the tri-fold, walking, talking, and creating model to art-based engagement, the walking tour of the site allows for participants to gain a feel for the space prior to the subsequent group discussion and creative workshop. With an important tool for disentangling the meanings and memories bound to place and space (Carpiano, 2009; King & Woodrooffe, 2017), researchers walking with participants on site create an act of remembrance, while the adjacent actions of capturing significant images of the site, and tracing their walk, equally provoke the participant’s connection to the past.

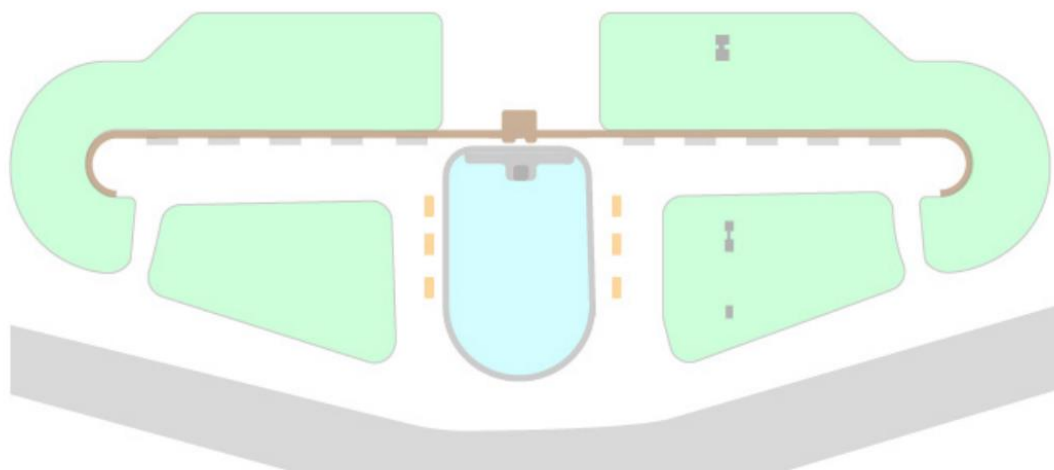


Figure 24: Rendering of Site from Above (Image via designer Trae Gallemit-Fraser)

Accordingly, in the first step of proposed art-based engagement, the participants would take the planner on a walk of the site, while documenting the significant visual elements and registering the path taken in stride. This proposed approach examines the site by foot and through the senses. To commence, the researcher would provide hypothetical participants with a copy of the guide to art-based engagement (Figure 24), pens, and a camera. Moving forward, in the first walking component of proposed art-based research, participants would be asked to take the planner on a tour of the site, and the seven participants would sequentially escort the planner. For data collection in this walking segment, participants would be provided the planner's camera and be instructed to photograph – within their own interpretations – significant imagery seen along their walk of the site. Aside from taking meaningful photographs, the participants would also be asked – with a pen provided – to trace their walks of the site onto the participatory guide given to them by the planner facilitating artistic engagement. Tracing their walks, participants would pinpoint the route they took while taking photographs, and thus identify significant elements of the site in their own terms.

The actions of bringing participants and researchers together to explore a space by foot therefore “minimizes some of the perceived limitations of more traditional, stationary sit-down interview” (King & Woodroffe, 2017, p.3). Calling upon the participants to recollect, reflect, and ease into their surroundings (Sumaratojo, 2019, p.28), this attunement to site “engages in a process that begins with sensing, noticing, and thinking about something that we as researchers wish to know more about” (Sumaratojo, 2019, p.28). Effectively, walking to remember connects participants to their surroundings, as repetitive gestures in a singular locale function to remind the person of previous experiences (Drozdewski & Birdsall, 2019, p.53). For a researcher, walking the site with participants would provide person-centred and interactive exercise aimed at

understanding human experience and social action (Kusenbach, 2003; King & Woodroffe, 2017). Evoking memory, when presented with an enabling methodology, the emplaced, sensory, and mobile dynamics of walking tours reveal the participants' rites of remembrance.

6.2.2. Talking: Noting memory

Following the walking segment of this proposed participatory and collaborative approach to art-based engagement, comes the second, group discussion step of consultation that relies on the activist mediator to lead talks with participating members of Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities. Taking the time to talk through the monument's current state and its potential for alteration, the talking component of art-based engagement possesses a synergistic effect on the group (van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018, p. 22). With the activist leading discussion, the object of dialogue is to develop mutual recognition among participants, which is conducive to creating a relaxed environment that increases the willingness to participate (van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018a, p. 23). Subsequently, in this proposed, group discussion segment, the activist mediator takes the time to talk through images with participants, and the planner steps back to leave space for the community members to speak about their recollections, experiences, and ideas for moving forward.

With a duty to prompt dialogue, the planner ought to facilitate consultation so that "stimulating materials, such as photographs, are present to engage participants in the specific situation" (van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018a, p. 21). The use of photographs of the monument as imaginative prompts encourages creative solutions for the contested site, because "participants think about existing and potential changes, and come up with anticipated solutions" (van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018a, p. 20). Therefore, three images displaying colonial significance at the Indië-Nederland Monument are shown. In Figure 25, alongside the three images of the monument itself, are three other photographs of dialogical intervention elsewhere in the world that demonstrate the

range of possibilities for dialogic, counter-commemorative design interventions. Serving as prompts for imagination, Hrdlicka's original counter-memorial in Hamburg is the first image shown as it is the first site officially designated as a counter-monument (Young, 1992; Stevens *et al.*, 2012). The Hamburg counter-monument represents a complex and counter-positional character of dialogic juxtapositions. Furthermore, an image drawn from Eröss's (2018) work "*In memory of victims*": *Monument and counter-monument in Liberty Square, Budapest*, offers an example of simplistic, dialogic intervention from post-conflict Hungary. Last, the final image is one of the winning entries in the Canadian Centre for Architecture's contest *After Macdonald* (2021), which prompted planning, architecture, and design students to reimagine a counter-memorial intervention for the disavowed, colonially significant monument in Montreal to Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister. Titled *The Swing: The legacy of John A. Macdonald* (Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2021), the final visual is a rendering of a dialogic counter-memorial intervention on a colonial and contested monument that was dismembered through anti-colonial protest in 2020.

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Icon of Colonial History



Index of Colonial Violence



Symbol of the Nation



Hamburg: original dialogic



Budapest: Dialogic Intervention (Eröss, 2018)



Montreal: The Swing (CCA, 2021)

Figure 25: Prompts for Talking (Image via designer Trae Gallemit-Fraser)

In practice, if this approach to art-based engagement were to be followed, the second step of consultation would involve the use of Post-it notes to capture the memories, ideas, and intentions of participants in relation to the presented images. Following Wilder and Mentegazzi's (2018) approach to consulting citizens on built heritage transformation, participants would be handed Post-it notes and asked to note their thoughts on the presented photographs. The planning and design of changing heritage could thereby be achieved in function with the words and intents of those consulted (Wilder & Mentegazzi, 2016, p. 42). The participants' words on paper provide the planner with data that make associations between memory notes and prompted images. With associations noted between participants and photographic prompts, the group discussion segment of this tri-fold model to arts-based participation empowers a consulted community to qualify the site as is, but also, to imagine the monument beyond its contemporary status.

6.2.3. Creating: Artistic intervention

After walking and talking, this proposed approach to art-based engagement for the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities makes space for participants to create their own images of counter-memory against the colonial and contested Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam. Arriving at the final component of citizen consultation, this arts-based engagement in spatial science research would derive research output through "artistic media as enhanced self-expression" (van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018a, p. 27). Making a medium through which participants can exchange ideas and thoughts (van der Vaart *et al.*, 2018a), art-based methods communicate beyond mere speech. As such, the creative workshop segment of the tri-fold model would allow participants to visualize meanings and memories through the acts of critical artistic practice.

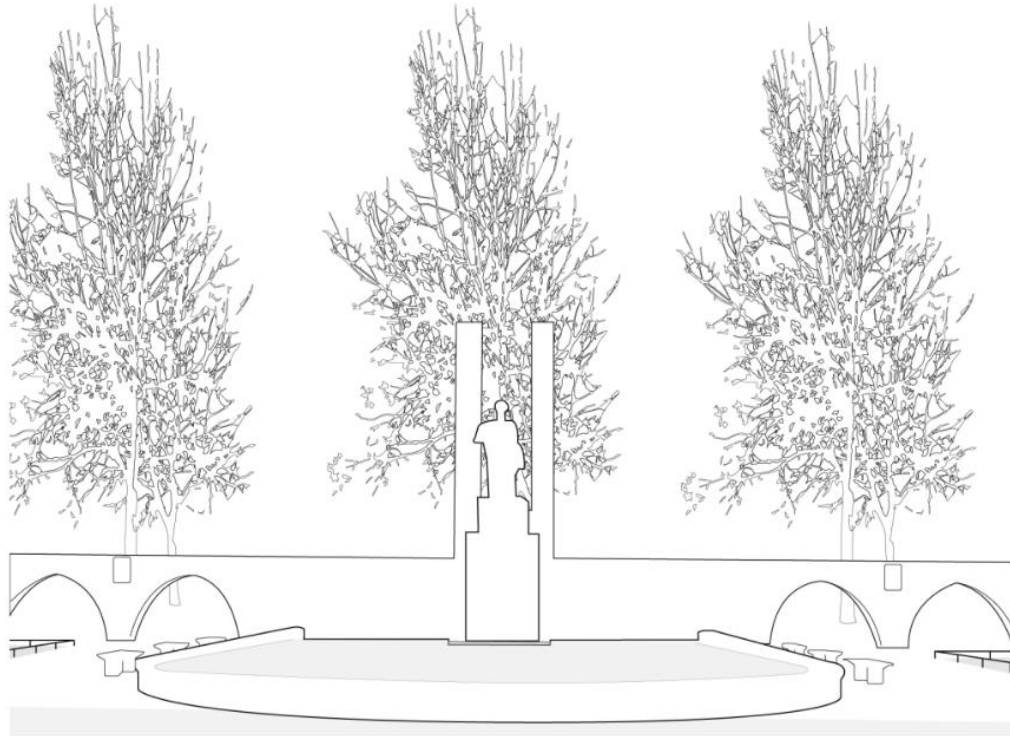


Figure 26: Prompt for Creating (Image via designer Trae-Gallemit Fraser)

In the third step of this participatory art-based engagement, the activist mediator and the selected members of the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities fill out the third component of the guide for art-based participatory research: an opportunity for participants to draw their own dialogical counter-monumental feature for the Indië-Nederland Monument. In turn, this participatory method of spatial intervention would enact Dobbins's reflective practice (2009), which "designs places to reflect the people who are or will be there" (p.175). This proposed reflective practice has the potential to co-produce spaces in a way that planners facilitate citizen engagement to think of alternatives and determine viable approaches for intervention (*Ibid.*). Overall, this proposal of tripartite, art-based spatial intervention would bring forth the counter-memorialization of the Indië-Nederland Monument as it could bring immaterial senses, feelings, and thoughts explicitly into being through participatory art-work.

Representing an anti-colonial and art-based, dialogic intervention on contested public memory (Cooper-Bolam, 2018), the creative workshop component of research prompts “participants to recall and show personal experiences, to critically view and interpret one another’s representations, and to further refine their images to clarify their intended meaning” (Greenwood, 2019). Proposing to re-imagine the Indië-Nederland Monument otherwise, the walking tour, group discussion, and creative workshop approach to art-based spatial planning practice gives form to the counter-memorial impressions of participants. If applied by the Amsterdam Zuid municipality, a CBPR with Indo-Dutch participants of the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities could share authorship over the site, and re-shape its politicized appearances in a similar vein to its original author Frits van Hall.

6.3. Reflecting on Counter-Commemorative Vigilance: Sharing authorship, agonistic intervention, and critical art

Researching the urban planning of public memory in the Netherlands proved to be challenge in the winter of 2022. Due to uncertainties on social gatherings, imminent lockdowns, and legal restrictions in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the person responsible for this research was resigned to research from behind a desk – or in relation to urban spaces without their social constituents. Facing the complexities of social distance by working from a resigned and facilitative position, this account of intervening on contested public memory sites turns from semiotic analysis towards a community-based and co-produced, art-based solution. Hence, approaching counter-memorialization with facilitative planning and co-design, this study turns to critical artistic practices as a tool for intervention on the Indië-Nederland Monument. This leads to the third and final research question (3): *What are the political implications of dialogic approaches to counter-memorial planning and design of the Indië-Nederland Monument?*

In general, critical remembrance is an act of restorative justice essential for maintaining a healthy democracy (Mistral, 2005), as “conceptualising memory as resistance has also proved a useful tool to empower those socio-cultural groups traditionally excluded from official historical and cultural-historical narratives pandering to specific political agendas” (Drozdowski *et al.*, 2014, p.453). In the Netherlands, despite a widespread abnegation from thinking about a guilty and shameful colonial past (Oostindie, 2011), common conceptions over the identities and memories that tie people together are undergoing transformation from a diversifying population base and a burgeoning pluralism (Ashworth *et al.*, 2007; Bosma, 2012; Pattynama, 2012). Offering new opportunity to feel, think, and share memory (Shea, 2019), this proposal for CBPR aims to continue the work of planning counter-memory on site; however, moving restorative justice forward through the spatial planning of Dutch colonial public memory should be addressed in a participatory, community-based method for social change (Wilson, 2018; Shea, 2019). To cultivate this pluralism, a facilitative planning and design can turn to an agonistic method of participatory art-based consultation and co-authorship of spatial intervention.

Working to rethink and reconfigure public memories along different lines, mnemonic justice (Assman, 2015) necessitates dialogical approaches that “no longer evolve exclusively around a heroic self-image but also acknowledges historical violence” (Assman, 2015, p.206). Distinct to the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities is a memory-work that resists “storing and burying static traces of the colonial past and reaffirms a need for present retrieval of memories to the colonial relationship with the Netherlands” (Pattynama, 2012, p.179). In Amsterdam, the municipal realm of urban planning and design provides opportunity for society’s necessary memory-work (Stevens & Franck, 2016, p. 236; Young, 2016, p.7), and agonistic art-based interventions provide a means for concertation.

Discussing the pluralistic utility of agonistics, Mouffe (2013) remarks critical artistic practices can spawn acts of defiance, resistance, and material transformation. Vividly, critical art can breach normative order and openly challenge unidimensional and static understandings of history. Harnessing democratic legitimacy and practical insights, reflective capacities for judgement, feeling, and expression (de Jonge, 2008) could steer co-design and empower the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities to gain authorship over new political spaces that can be visualized, recognized, and mobilized (Munthe-Kaas, 2015, p.221). In such a reflective practice, it is as if the “planner was holding up a mirror for people to see their contributions in space reflected back at them” (Dobbins, 2009, p.175). When intervening on public space, de Jonge (2008) argues there is a political value in following reflective judgement.

In their account, de Jonge (2008) identifies co-design procedures as venue for inter-personal dialogue, creative imagination, and rituals of critical reflection (de Jonge, 2008, p.39). In turn, de Jonge evokes Hannah Arendt’s account of “going visiting” as a virtuously democratic action of imagining oneself in the position of others where one looks upon the world from another’s standpoint. Carefully learning to embrace differences (*Ibid.*), such reflective judgement embraces a plurality in perspectives. Similarly, Amir Eshel (2019) recognizes a power in reflective judgement, and notes that public “artworks can open up spaces of and spaces for open-ended reflection” (Eshel, 2019, p.6). Likewise, Chantal Mouffe celebrates critical art in the public domain as it mobilizes reflective forms of judgement and “unveils what is repressed by dominance” (Mouffe, 2008a, p.154). As such, the ideas of de Jonge, Eshel, and Mouffe are all influenced by Immanuel Kant, and mutually identify a democratic vitality in reflective judgement embodied by the individual’s acts of “going visiting.”

Kant scholar Nicholas Dunn (2019; 2021) provides clarity on the power of reflective modes of thinking, as opposed to determining forms of judgement premised on applying concepts to objects. Notably, when thinking reflectively, judging and feeling are interlaced (Dunn, 2021; Dunn, Draft, pp. 2-3), and the individual encounters public life with greater autonomy, discovering differences through a sense of plurality. Correspondingly, there is democratic value in the reflective practices of “going visiting” (Dunn, 2019, p.12) that requires we imagine the world otherwise from the standpoint of others, as well as from your own. Synchronizing planning and resistance, the agonism of critical art for memorial change could allow for Indo-Dutch citizens to come together, “go visiting” and think of the colonially significant monument otherwise. However, there are limits to agonistic models of citizen participation, and both Zakhour (2020) and Kuhn (2020) note tensions.

In particular, Kuhn (2020) notes issues in agonistics: who is responsible for mediation; what is the role of the citizen; and where does legitimacy come from in an adversarial democracy? As previously argued, the turn to art-based methods clarifies the first two concerns by seeking out activist involvement for mediation, and participatory art for citizens. To address the third concern, Zakhour (2020) argues agonistic spatial intervention gains its democratic legitimacy in its reflexivity. Hence, agonistic interventions offer an elaborate system of social participation and divided sovereignty whereby power is polycentric, authorship over common living environments is shared, and agonism spawns plurality (Cento-Bull & Hansen, 2015; Zakhour, 2020). In such a way, by encouraging an art-based CBPR aimed at giving Indo-Dutch citizens the chance to rework the site in collaboration with Amsterdam Zuid, social sovereignty could be expanded and diversified through this proposed, new avenue for citizen participation and co-influence over planning, design, and public decision-making.

7. Conclusion

Managing the Indië-Nederland Monument poses itself as a significant challenge for urban planners and municipal policy-makers wishing to intervene on a site that is both a source of public memorial tension, as well as a site for everyday use in Amsterdam Zuid. Publicly acknowledging the intricate and controversial history behind the monument, Amsterdam's municipal government proves a willingness to rethink and act critically on the monument's urban form and its portrayal of colonial significance (Buitenkunst Amsterdam; van Velsen, n.d). Accordingly, it is through semiotic analysis that the primary question at the heart of this research can be answered: the Indië-Nederland Monument represents a contested Dutch public memory to colonial ties with Indonesia through the site's authors and audiences, and the commemorative mediums making the two inextricable.

In terms of authorship, the site's meaning has changed over time to reflect changing mindsets towards the colonial past in the Netherlands. Notably, apart from the municipality's name change and re-purposing of the site, significance is found in both explicit and implicit visual elements sculpted by van Hall and then added by Jan Kleingeld on behalf of Amsterdam Zuid. The grand statue of an abstract women holding a scroll represents van Hall's turn to allegorical visual language to convey a difficult remembrance to a culpable figure from a painful period tying the Netherlands and Indonesia. Collectively dictated by its authors, the site's dialogical pairing of monument from 1935 with an added feature from 2007 is particularly meaningful; it expresses a dramatized new meaning (Stevens *et al.*, 2012) through framing Indonesian sovereignty. Evidently, the persistently contested Indië-Nederland Monument, Amsterdam carries a colonial significance in the intention of those who have collaborated to author the site.

Constrained by prevailing Covid-19 conditions in the winter of 2022, this planner's semiotics of the Indië-Nederland Monument studies the general reception of the site through participant observation, informal conversations with relevant local actors, archival work, and secondary source research. In terms of the site's audienceship, the monument itself is open to a plurality of potential interpretations by a diverse audience. This fact is reinforced by van Hall's abstracted and allegorical representations, but also by the dialogic with added images of Indonesian sovereignty from 2007. To qualify the monument's interpretation, it was explored through four dimensions. As such, the cognitive one was seen in the dialogical pairing of monument and added features, which reminds one of a complicated, multi-faceted, and ever-changing visual presence for colonial heritage. Forming the understanding of a difficult heritage, the cognitive element reminds audiences of the colonial relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia, but also the myriad means that exist by which to remember it.

Subsequently, the axiological dimension is manifest in van Hall's allegories of femineity, indigeneity, and the national which leave abstracted and ambiguous impressions on audiences. Moreover, the monument's emotional aspect is tied to its explicit portrayal of a colonial violence in its ornaments. Significantly, depictions of warfare in Atjeh are especially sensitive for the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities, as this was the site of van Heutsz's violence and a source of his disgrace. Furthermore, in terms of its pragmatic dimensions, the monument is a venue for anti-colonial vigilance, political protest, and also recently, an inclusive and progressive remembrance in August 2021 led by activism of the Indo-Dutch mnemonic communities. However, the pragmatic element of the Indië-Nederland Monument is nuanced by its mundane standing in the lives of locals. Predominately, the students from the adjacent Amsterdams Lyceum use the site for its physical asset rather than its commemorative purpose. Incorporated

into the daily lives of passersby, the Indië-Nederland Monument is integrated into its surroundings, equipped with benches for leisure, and proximately placed to host a crowd of students on break from school.

Moving forward, further work ought to learn from the limits of this study and enhance its validity through the direct participation of members of aggrieved mnemonic communities, in both provision of the audience perspective in semiotic analysis, but also the communication of a visual for dialogic intervention in art-based methods of participation. However, in the meantime, the provision of a participatory guide fulfills the planner's duty to facilitate the co-production of spatial intervention, and eases the execution of the walking tour, group discussion, and creative workshop model for engagement. Relying on a model for agonistic and counter-commemorative spatial planning intervention presented in the theoretical framework, participatory and artistic intervention forms common ground between authors and audiences and solves the second research question about viable options for counter-memorial intervention. Addressing the third research question, the political implications of a dialogism in counter-memorial planning and design is found in its initiation of a counter-commemorative vigilance to the site's initial purpose, intended interpretation, and current standing. The agonistic turn to participatory artistic intervention shares authorship, but also allows for those impacted by a painful past to take action in the present, and potentially re-shape a contested monument's future.

8. References

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