Hamburg's Spaces of Danger:
Race, Violence and Memory in a Contemporary Global City

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Abstract

Germany today is experiencing the strongest upsurge of right-wing populism since the second world war, most notably with the rise of Pegida and Alternative für Deutschland. Yet wealthy global cities like Hamburg continue to present themselves as the gatekeepers of liberal progress and cosmopolitan openness. This article argues that Hamburg's urban boosterism relies on, while simultaneously obscuring, the same structures of racial violence that embolden reactionary movements. Drawing on the work of Walter Benjamin and Allan Pred, we present an archaeology of Hamburg's landscape, uncovering some of its 'spaces of danger'—sites layered with histories of violence, many of which lie buried and forgotten. We find that these spaces, when they become visible, threaten to undermine Hamburg's cosmopolitan narrative. They must, as a result, be continually erased or downplayed in order to secure the city as an attractive site for capital investment. To illustrate this argument, we give three historical examples: Hamburg's role in the Hanseatic League during the medieval and early modern period; the city under the Nazi regime; and the recent treatment of Black African refugees. The article's main contribution is to better situate issues of historical landscape, collective memory and racialized violence within the political economy of today's global city.

Introduction: Hamburg's Gateway

Built between 1888 and 1916, the Stadthöfe complex sits at the center of downtown Hamburg. In 2009, the city sold the property to the real estate developer Quantum Immobilien, which has since transformed the site into a glitzy latticework of luxury apartments, bars, boutiques, a restaurant, hotel and 15,000 square meters of office space. Brochures for the new development describe it as one of *unendliches Plaisir* (endless pleasure). But, as some Hamburg residents have angrily pointed out, this pleasure has been built on a history of violence. From 1933 to 1944 one of the buildings in the Stadthöfe served as the headquarters for the Nazi Gestapo, who used the basement for imprisonment and interrogation. Thousands of individuals were tortured and murdered at the site, which was often the first station of suffering on the way to the concentration camps. Quantum, whose marketing tagline for the Stadthöfe project is 'homage to life', has taken what was once a dreaded place of confinement and rebranded it to welcome visitors, at least those with money to spend. Reinforcing this image of hospitality was a wrought-iron sign Quantum placed above the site's entrance that read, *Bienvenue, Moin Moin, Stadthof* (Welcome, Hello [a cheeky North German phrase], Stadthof). The sign, which was designed as a tribute to the 1920s, drew intense criticism. Its typography and black ironwork were said to resemble the *Arbeit macht frei* (Work sets you free) signs the Nazis placed above concentration-camp gates. In 2018, capitulating to protests, Quantum agreed to remove it (Block, 2018; Connolly, 2018; O'Sullivan, 2018).

The Stadthöfe controversy became what might be called a 'space of danger'. Following the work of Allan Pred (1995; 1998; 2000; 2004; 2005) we argue that a space of danger is a site that is layered with histories of violence, many of which lie buried and forgotten. It is a concept invoking place-based forms of historical recollection that have the

potential to disrupt the 'taken for granted' and 'business as usual'. When exposed or exhumed, spaces of danger pose an immediate threat to the existing order of space and time. Their emergence can cause remembrance and retellings—often leading to disruptive political practices and frictions impeding the smooth flows of capital.

Figure 1. Left: Entrance gate at Sachsenhausen concentration camp (photo from Pixabay); Right: Entrance gate at Hamburg's Stadthöfe (photo by Pauli Pirat)

In Germany today, there is a sense that spaces of danger are becoming more common. In 2017, for example, *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) became the first far-right, populist party to enter the nation's parliament since the second world war. Founded in 2013 as an anti-Euro party, the AfD soon invoked ideas about national territory and pride that drew on older, place-based sentiments of belonging and the Fatherland. These sentiments were paired with a reclamation of the term *voelkisch*, a word used during the Nazi period to identify and separate 'proper' Germans from Jews and others considered racially inferior (*BBC News*, 2016). Rooted in such ideas, the party has increasingly adopted a staunch anti-immigration stance. Owing to its ultranationalist rhetoric, racism and xenophobia, it has reminded some, like Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, of 'real Nazis' (Shalal, 2017). The Stadthöfe renovation and the upsurge of the AfD raise questions about history and memory that are bound up with place and the violent, racializing legacies associated with place-based forms of belonging, identity and

territory. These are legacies that can be buried or celebrated, but in each case, 'the past is not dead' (Pred, 2004) and its return is always fraught with danger.

Nevertheless, many cities with violent pasts attempt to obscure this history. Hamburg, for example, has largely been able to present itself as a consistent champion of cosmopolitan values and liberal progress (see e.g. DeWaal, 2017). The city's urban boosterism welds narratives of commercial opportunity with those of personal mobility, freedom and welcome to strangers. For example, the city is touted as having a long history of tolerance that continues up to the present day. In 2017, *Business Insider* named it as one of the most 'sociable and friendly' cities in the world, ranking its residents third in terms of their 'openness to others' (Millington, 2017). Meanwhile, the city was the first in Germany to embrace an entrepreneurial and deliberately growth-oriented urban policy in an attempt to attract foreign capital (Vogelpohl and Buchholz, 2017). This occurred in the mid-1980s, when policymakers introduced the idea of *Unternehmen Hamburg* (Enterprise Hamburg) to 'propel the city more dynamically into national and European competitiveness' (Novy and Colomb, 2013: 1823). Economic competitiveness has also been bolstered by its busy port, which helped give the city its nickname, the 'Gateway to the World'.

In this article we argue that spaces of danger, such as the sign linking the 'new' Stadthöfe luxury complex with the 'old' Stadthöfe's Gestapo past, pose a threat to Hamburg's cosmopolitan standing, undermining its Gateway to the World mythos and, potentially, its financial stability. For this reason, the city's elite have acted quickly and forcefully to narrate and 'recollect' a history of openness and welcome while simultaneously burying or minimizing any urban fragments that contradict this positive story.[1] We believe that it is important to address this double movement because it can

facilitate and embolden those actors who rely on collective silence and amnesia in the face of economic and political violence, both past and present, while at the same time delimiting the spatial and temporal horizon of urban struggle (*cf.* Herf, 1997; Deák *et al.*, 2000; Pred, 2005; Goldberg, 2006; Nagle, 2017).

Despite its narrative of openness and free movement, Hamburg does not grant everyone entrepreneurial freedoms, nor has it ever. Like the local growth machines of other times and places (Logan and Molotch, 2007), the actions taken by actors and institutions to shape, develop and promote the city have largely reflected the interests of a white, Christian, (neo)liberal urban elite.[2] The constant efforts to narrate a city of uninterrupted entrepreneurial freedom and welcome thus remain in tension with the ever-present struggles over the nationalist and racialized spaces and practices of both past and present. What we highlight here is how, in Hamburg as in many other cities, contemporary forms of inequality and racial violence have deep roots running through the soil of earlier spaces of danger. To remain attractive for capital and to secure the city's *Unternehmen* (literally, 'undertaking') these spaces must remain hidden in the landscape.

In what follows we expose some of these spaces of danger through an archaeology of Hamburg's landscape, excavating the historical spaces of racial and ethnic violence that have been submerged beneath neoliberal fields. We give three historical examples: Hamburg's role in the Hanseatic League during the medieval and early modern period; the city under the Nazi regime; and the recent treatment of Black African refugees. Taking a *Tigersprung* (literally 'tiger leap'—a mental leap backwards) into each of these pasts, we identify spaces of danger that shatter the discursive foundations of Hamburg's Gateway narrative (Benjamin, 1968). In our first example we point to the ways that, in

contrast to contemporary narratives of Hanseatic openness, Hamburg's merchant wealth was built on and through structures of social exclusion and ethnic violence, particularly the exclusion of Jews and non-merchant laborers outside the city's gates. In the second case we show how these geographies of exclusion continued, albeit in a more brutal form, during the Nazi era at Hamburg's Neuengamme labor camp. In the final site, we suggest that this racial violence is manifested in the city's *Gefahrengebiet* (Danger Area) laws and in the harsh treatment of Black African asylum seekers in recent years (Meret and Della Corte, 2014; Sutter, 2014). In order to emphasize how forces of racial violence and exclusion are also challenged and resisted by those they target, we explore the formation of Lampedusa in Hamburg, a refugee group that seeks to represent and protest, on a global stage, the treatment of their members.

The archaeological approach we pursue here and the leaps it entails remain grounded in the fieldwork that one of the authors conducted in Hamburg during Summer 2017. It consisted of media analysis, informal interviews, photographing, observing the city on foot, and research in the 'Open Archive' of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial. During this fieldwork period the author became sharply aware of the multiple narratives that work to cement Hamburg's identity as an open global city. At the same time, there were other historical spaces and racialized bodies—such as the Neuengamme remains and the Lampedusa in Hamburg migrants—whose traces and presence were much fainter. The ultimate aim of excavating and analyzing these more opaque sites and practices is not just to uncover the injustices of the past, but to recover them in the service of today's struggles, placing discarded fragments along the surface of contemporary urban landscapes. Digging up the violent past in this way and redepositing it within the present helps us to trace radical solidarities across a city's history (*cf*. Dikeç and Swyngedouw, 2017). This requires seeing sites of struggle not as

isolated, self-contained moments but as linked, critically, across both space and time. As Walter Benjamin (1968) observed shortly before his ill-fated attempt to flee the Gestapo in France, recollecting and representing distant pasts and different histories, and spatially rearranging them within the present, can transform the latter, carving out radical future trajectories.

Today, nearly 80 years after Benjamin's death, this project remains as pressing as ever. In global cities such as Hamburg, despite the strong desire of liberal urban boosters to remove spaces of racial violence and resistance from sight, they refuse to remain hidden. As we will show, the historical profitability of race-based forms of exploitation and the long-standing collusion of Hamburg's capitalists in acts of ethnic violence leave a deep and continuing legacy. These fragments of landscape and memory arise to confront and contradict contemporary representations of neoliberal planetary harmony and a frictionless urban plain (see e.g. Fukuyama, 1992; Ohmae, 1999; Friedman, 2005). We believe it is increasingly vital to excavate and expose this debris in the context of the rise of the AfD and other right-wing groups in Germany today (see Decker, 2016; Rucht, 2018). In the next section we describe this theoretical framing in greater detail.

Global cities and the current moment of danger

Allan Pred was one of the earliest urban geographers to work on questions of time and memory in the urban landscape (see Pred, 1977; 1984). The eclecticism of his work, combining rigorous economic analysis with experimental investigations of memory and montage, gave it a depth and richness that offered a direct challenge to the 'complacencies' (Katz, 2015: 300) of the present, both in terms of visible urban landscapes and accepted modes of social research. In his later works, especially *Recognizing European Modernities* (1995) and *The Past Is Not Dead* (2004), Pred sought

a method and form of analysis that would produce an 'image of forgotten histories juxtaposed with the present' (2004: xvii). Such a 'stunning constellation' (*ibid.*: 60) enabled him to unsettle contemporary geographies, undermining linear and progressive notions of urban development. In this Pred is the geographer-heir to Walter Benjamin, adding a spatially situated dimension to the latter's ideas on history and time (Benjamin 1968; 1999; see also Buck-Morss, 1991; Merrill and Hoffman, 2015; Mitchell, 2015).

Benjamin (1968) penned his last major work, 'On the Concept of History', in early 1940 while living as a Jewish refugee in Paris. The essay takes issue with homogenous and empty notions of time, those that articulate the past as something fixed: 'how it really was'. Against this, Benjamin puts forward a theory of *Jetztzeit* (now-time) which requires a 'tiger's leap' into the past, sifting through the rubble of what was, blasting it out of the straitjacket of history and reclaiming it for radical politics today. This leap becomes possible during a 'moment of danger' when the soils of tradition are shaken and become looser, pushing up images of the past that had been long buried. Today, moments of danger are increasingly common, evidenced by the eruptions of violence over the last century. The revolutionary task, for Benjamin, is to seize the memories that flash up during such moments, to charge them with the voltage of present struggles. This requires a view from below—from the subterranean currents of history's oppressed. Memories of oppression are not affirmed; they are critically redeemed. Rather than simply documenting danger, Benjamin's approach seeks to unground the very structures that have allowed danger to occur.

Above all, Pred's work provides a blueprint for locating Benjamin's moments of danger in urban space, revealing legacies of racialization, exploitation and violence in places where they have been forgotten. Rather than moments in time, Pred emphasizes *spaces*

of danger (Merrill and Hoffman, 2015). For him, violence is buried not only in the historical record but also, literally, in the urban landscape. Benjamin was, of course, also concerned with memory and the city, as is clear in his explorations of nineteenth-century Paris in the *Arcades Project*, as well as his writings on Berlin, Moscow and Naples (see Gilloch, 1996). What Pred adds—perhaps with the advantage of seeing the twentieth century in hindsight—is an attention to race and to globalization. Both are crucial for understanding the resurgence of xenophobic violence today and how it is bound up with uneven and racialized urban geographies.

In this article we locate Pred's spaces of danger within the global city of Hamburg. The global city, as many scholars have noted, is generally framed in terms of its financial connections and command and control functions in the global production process (Sassen, 2001; Castells, 2002; Roy, 2011). Critics point to the vicious underbelly of labor exploitation in its contemporary workings as well as its spatial unevenness and inequality (Shatkin, 2007; Mitchell and MacFarlane, 2016; Short, 2018). With increasing levels of uneven development and spatial segregation, many scholars now describe contemporary global cities as composed of separate and unequal parts, calling them 'dual cities' or 'divided cities' (Garrido, 2013; Nagle, 2013). Further, recent critiques have begun to emphasize the racial nature of these divides. In addition to the extreme levels of segregation and ethnic clustering occurring within many global cities (Pamuk, 2004; Stahre, 2004) there are (re-)emerging forms of racism and racial violence, such as the neo-Nazi currents Pred observed in Stockholm at the end of the millennium (Pred, 2000).

Rarely, however, is the global city's history investigated for what is deliberately obscured alongside what is promoted and memorialized (but see Harvey, 1979). Thus, relatively

little attention has been given to how this geographical unevenness and divisiveness is stabilized through a form of selective memory that celebrates urban tolerance and unity, how it is concealed beneath the visible landscape. A Predian approach to urban history helps to address this gap, showing how certain subjectivities, fragments, and violent legacies are 'rendered unspeakable' and 'collectively forgotten' only to re-emerge in moments and spaces of danger (Pred, 2004: 201; see also Merrill and Hoffman, 2015). They are often found in the city's more subterranean regions, in its darkened gutters and hidden Gestapo rooms.

As an entrepreneurial actor within an international market, the global city benefits from certain forms of exploitation and racial violence (Bloch and McKay, 2016; Chang, 2016). But this 'racial capitalism' must also be obscured (Melamed, 2011). Even though necessary for capital accumulation, spaces of danger are simultaneously forgotten, sanitized or made illegible to allow cities to present themselves as progressive, future-leaning and worthy of investment. This boosterist representation has become increasingly necessary in the context of growing urban competition between cities and between global regions under neoliberal forms of governance (Harvey, 1989; Hackworth, 2007; Jonas and Ward, 2007; Payre, 2010; Didier *et al.*, 2012). To this end, global cities have increasingly become landscapes of selective memory, where certain pasts are highlighted over others. These are gated landscapes in the sense that memories are pre-screened and barred from urban space, a space which is thereby made smoother and more easily traversable for a neoliberal elite, even while others become stuck or forgotten (see Fernandes, 2004; Sparke, 2006; Gustafson, 2013). Such an experience of time belongs to what Pred (1995: 15) calls hypermodernity—'capitalist modernity accentuated and sped up'. In the process of acceleration, the past is forgotten (Koselleck, 2018).

Of course, the 'hypermodern present in Europe is not a homogenized moment' (Pred, 1995: 22). Spaces of danger are negotiated in different ways across different cities. In the German context, much has been written about Berlin as a contested site of memory, where buildings, monuments and ruins attest to the desire to remember, learn from and work through the atrocities and violence of the past (see e.g. Mitchell, 2003; Till, 2005; Cochrane, 2006; Jordan, 2006; Fellows, 2009; Molnar, 2010; Ladd, 2018). These efforts at memorialization are not always successful. Damani Partridge (2015: 109), for example, has argued that the process of Holocaust memorialization—in creating monumental, abstracted displays—often fails to establish a connection between Nazi genocide and the many forms of racism and nationalism evident in Germany today (see also Dwyer, 2000; Rice and Kardux, 2012). Nevertheless, research indicates that those cities and regions that have engaged directly with the Nazi past have experienced less rapid and extreme expressions of far-right populism and xenophobia in the current era than those that have sought to bury it (Rucht, 2018; Stone, 2018).

We are thus interested in moving these discussions to a city where the memorialization of trauma is less visible in the landscape. The second largest city in Germany after Berlin, Hamburg, is far less well known vis-à-vis its relationship to the Nazi past. Instead, as shown below, Hamburg's cosmopolitan identity is rooted in a different kind of remembering, one that recalls a continuous legacy of international trade and economic resilience. And yet, with 7,800 of its Jewish residents murdered during the Holocaust, Hamburg is no less connected than Berlin to the atrocities of the twentieth century (Rozett and Spector, 2000). While Berlin's branding as an 'international cultural center' has relied heavily on its ability to establish particular links with history (Till, 2005: 5; see also Colomb, 2012), we demonstrate how Hamburg's entrepreneurial strategies—

precisely those that have made it a model global city—are predicated on paving over past and present spaces of danger.

Yet spaces of danger may still be recovered and 'put into practice' (Pred, 2004: 202). We also wish to show how, following Pred and Benjamin, new forms of resistance emerge in the process of sorting through the historical rubble of the global city, treating this rubble as lived experience (*cf.* Mah, 2010). The excavated spaces of the past rearticulate the present moment, and vice versa, revealing new circumstances and social formations that brush against the grain of global capitalism (Pred, 2004: 202). In the case of Hamburg, this method can 'throw open the possibility of a momentary insight, of a "flash" of re-cognition' (Pred 2004: xix) in which the urban landscape is illuminated to reveal new configurations of life and politics (Mitchell, 2015). As an example, we show how an urban refugee movement, Lampedusa in Hamburg, uses fragments of past and present forms of racialization and ideas about belonging to inform their struggle and make links to a broader international community (*cf.* Borgstede, 2017; Jørgensen, 2017; Sparke and Mitchell, 2018). First, however, we begin with some of the selective fantasies of urban progress that are emblematic of Hamburg's vision of itself and its global city future.

Medieval and early modern Hamburg (Hanseatic League)

In 1989, Hamburg celebrated the 800th anniversary of its port (Schmemann, 1989). To promote the occasion, the city's tourism board designed a poster showing a raft overflowing with a motley crew of artists, musicians, dancers and other performers (see Figure 2). Diversity is suggested through variations in skin tone. The poster encapsulates Hamburg's Gateway daydream of forward movement and social acceptance, appearing here in the colorful garb of the late twentieth-century entertainment industry. As a clown

heaves on an oar, a guitarist perched on the mast points towards the distance, as does a singer down below. Others look and smile. The line above the raft reads *Hamburg, wir kommen* (Hamburg, here we come).

Figure 2. Poster for the 800th anniversary of Hamburg's port, 1989 (Hamburg Tourist Board)

As mentioned in the poster, part of Hamburg's 1989 festivities included the *Hansetag*. The Hansetag is an international festival celebrating the history of the Hanseatic League (*die Hanse*), a confederation of Northern European cities that would come to dominate Baltic maritime trade from the twelfth to the late-fifteenth century (Graichen, 2011). The 1989 event was sponsored by a 'new Hanse', started nine years earlier, intent on 'reviving the ideas and spirit of the European city' based on a Hanseatic model of cross-border cooperation (Die Hanse, 2018a). Now a network of 190 cities in 16 countries, the 'new Hanse' has revitalized the tradition of Hansetag, partly with the aid of EU funding. In its original form, between 1356 and 1669, the Hansetag (or *Tagfahrt*, 'convening day') was an important annual gathering of Hanseatic towns, where delegates would discuss commercial problems and vote on new regulations (Põder, 2010). While maintaining a 'medieval flair', the modern iteration of the Hansetag has replaced business strategizing with an 'open', 'multicultural' and 'very colorful festival with art, culture and music' (Die Hanse, 2018b). Similar to the international exhibitions in Stockholm that Pred (1995: 37–40) studied, this was a 'space where the commercial, the political and the cultural were ideologically melted together'. It was through this melting that Hamburg's feudal past could be fused to the core of its capitalist present, forming a specific gate of remembrance, one through which 'the public was to learn ... by looking'.

The revival of Hanseatic tradition plays a major role in how Hamburg presents itself today as an open and liberal global city. History and heritage have always been leveraged by governments and elites to shore up territorial authority on urban, regional and national scales (Mitchell, 2003; Borges, 2017). Hamburg is no exception. Officially called the 'Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg', the city traces a continuous line between its future orientation and its roots as a 'medieval city' governed by merchant alliances (*cf.* Alsayyad and Roy, 2006). Hamburg's Hansetag provided a vibrant example

of this. While gesturing towards a new 'unity in Europe', it did so through a selective recollection of the past. The festival took place 800 years after the city's port was founded, in 1189, when it received a charter from the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I (Sepe, 2013). The charter granted duty-free trade for ships on the Elbe river and established the marshy town of Hamburg as a Free Imperial City, which would allow it to play a significant role in the formation of the Hanseatic League and establish itself as the major commercial and trading center it remains today.

The narrative of Hamburg's Hanseatic ascendency is continually resuscitated during events such as the 1989 Hansetag, which serve as 'theaters of memory' for the re-enactment of selective histories (Boyer, 1994). Since 1977, for example, the city has commemorated the founding of its harbor each May during *Hafengeburtstag* (Port Birthday), which attracts over one million visitors from across Germany and beyond (Hamburg.de, 2018). There is also the annual *Versammlung Eines Ehrbaren Kaufmanns* (The Honorable Merchant's Gathering) which celebrated its 500th anniversary in 2017 at the Elbphilharmonie, a new concert hall that has been said to capture the 'entrepreneurial spirit' of the city (VEEK, 2017; *The Local*, 2017).

But Hanseatic history is not only dredged up during periodic festivals, rituals and performances; it is also visible in the everyday landscape. The state flag of Hamburg, seen throughout the city, maintains the red-and-white color scheme of Hanseatic heraldry. Car license plates begin with the letters 'HH' denoting *Hansestadt Hamburg* (Hanseatic city of Hamburg) (see Figure 3). The same H- prefix can be found on plates from other Hanseatic cities in northern Germany, including Bremen, Lübeck, Greifswald, Rostock, Stralsund and Wismar. These images, announcing a past of long-distance trade, connection and movement, literally travel through the city on the automobiles of

Hamburg residents. While these boosterist representations of networked mobility adorn walls and cars, indicating a smooth and frictionless geographical plain, one of the additional points we want to draw out here is the way that they also, at the same time, promote and reinvent urban history, tying a desired future to a selective memory of progress, openness and welcome.

Figure 3. Hansestadt Hamburg License Plate (photo by Anna von Drehle)

It may appear strange to remap a merchant network that fell out of favor more than three centuries ago and to imprint it on the backs and fronts of cars, yet it is precisely the ghostly aspect of Hanseatic history, its past-ness, that makes it so attractive today. Viewed from the present, the Hanseatic world provides a historical anchor justifying social hierarchies under global capitalism. Many in Hamburg's elite class, for instance, trace their ancestry back to the tradition of the *Hanseatischer Kaufmann* (Hanseatic merchant) which continues to provide a mythic basis for aristocratic concepts of 'virtue' and 'honor' (Richter, 2014). This is an elitism compatible with cosmopolitan values. Hanseatic tolerance and world openness continue to act as insignia for Hamburg's civic

identity. After the second world war appeals to this tradition were made in support of international reconciliation, painting Hamburg as a natural leader in the post-war landscape (DeWaal, 2017). Today, some even consider the Hanseatic League as a prototype of the European Union. Several scholars have pointed out similarities between the League's protection of mutual interests and the market objectives of the EU (see e.g. Ginsberg, 2010). More generally, the federation's efforts to remove trade restrictions might be viewed as a precursor to the free market doctrines of the current neoliberal global regime.

Yet these are selective readings of the Hanseatic League, whose present-day visibility in the landscape is made to fit within a linear trajectory of progress and tolerance. Not only does the celebration of the *Hanse* render invisible other histories of struggle (see below), it simultaneously fetishizes the League itself, which is remembered through a neoliberal lens. Certain details have been forgotten. Hamburg affirms a legacy of Hanseatic tolerance as 'the gateway to the world', but, as historians have pointed out, this has been a tolerance with limits, accepting 'otherness' only 'partially and when it furthered trade and commerce' (Liedtke, 2013: 79). Even the narrative of free trade is suspect: while Hamburg exchanged freely on an international scale, within the city itself, after 1603, non-Lutherans were only allowed to live and work under special legislation. Starting in the late sixteenth century, wealthy Sephardic Jews began to settle within the city, many with business connections to Spanish and Portuguese merchant houses (Liedtke, 2013). Around 1611 the first Ashkenazi Jews arrived in Hamburg, but typically resided outside the city and were more likely to work in the retail business, as peddlers or craftsmen. When the Lutheran clergy called for the expulsion of Jews from Hamburg in 1649, it was the Ashkenazim—not the Sephardim—who were forced to leave (Albrecht, 2012). These racial and class lines were reinforced in the city's architecture.

Until 1860, a nightly gate closure locked out religious minorities, including poorer Jews (Liedtke, 2013). In the following century, the Nazis would try to keep the Jews locked in, within urban ghettos and concentration camps both inside and outside the city (Lavsky, 2002).

Nazi-era Hamburg (Neuengamme Concentration Camp)

Although they occurred much more recently, Nazi violence against Jews and the atrocities of war are, in many ways, less detectable in Hamburg's landscape than the legacies of a Hanseatic League that collapsed hundreds of years ago. This is evident at the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, located in the city's Bergedorf borough. The SS established Neuengamme in 1938 on the site of an abandoned brick factory (KZ-Gedenkstätte, 2018a). Today, the prisoner's barracks are only visible as what the main exhibit calls 'history's traces' (KZ-Gedenkstätte, 2018b). Visitors are able to see the outlines of their foundations, now full of rubble from archaeological excavations. This erasure, while never complete, has much to do with the continuities of exclusion that the city took an active role in paving over before, during, and after the war. In counterpoint to Hanseatic reveries of openness, Neuengamme's structures of violence have literally shaped and enclosed the city's landscape, continuing to haunt its built environment and to corral certain bodies—and certain kinds of labor—into spaces of rubble, violence and erasure.

While barely visible in the landscape today, aspects of Nazi-era Hamburg can be pieced together by sifting through the Neuengamme Concentration Camp's Open Archive (see KZ-Gedenkstätte, 2005). A work camp, Neuengamme supplied cheap labor for armaments production during the second world war. By 1945, Neuengamme's operations had expanded to include over 650 subcamps in Hamburg and across

northern Germany, some enclosed by lethal electric fences (Buggeln, 2009). As in Hamburg's early modern period, Jews were only tolerated and allowed to live within a gated region if they proved to be economically productive. Sent from camp to camp, they were treated no differently than Hanseatic commodities. In fact, during the final days of the war, the Nazis attempted to 'export' thousands of prisoners across the Baltic Sea. The two ships were attacked and destroyed, killing about 7,000 prisoners (Klei, 2011). By the war's end, approximately half of Neuengamme's 100,400 prisoners had perished, although the total is difficult to calculate since the Nazis destroyed camp records (Buggeln, 2009).

While the atrocities committed against Jews and other prisoners at Neuengamme were covered up by the Nazi administration and remain largely invisible within Hamburg's cosmopolitan landscape, they left a lasting mark on the city's structure and on the earth itself. Especially early on, the camp provided a source of labor for Hamburg's urban renewal program under the Nazi regime, designed by architect Konstanty Gutschow (Koshar, 1998). In 1940, the city signed a contract with the SS for the construction of a new brickworks (see Figure 4). There, in collaboration with the Hamburg City Council, prisoners built prefabricated concrete parts for air-raid bunkers, provisional housing and furnaces (KZ-Gedenkstätte, 2005). The city's contract allowed it to purchase bricks from the factory to use in the construction of buildings laid out in Gutschow's plans (Diefendorf, 1993).[3] In the end, Neuengamme prisoners were organized to serve Germany's war effort and Hamburg's redesign. In producing the urban landscape, they were also treated as part of it, objects to be rearranged and removed from sight and memory.

Figure 4. Brick factory at Neuengamme concentration camp (photo by Emily Monhey)

This removal continued after the war, when the city of Hamburg opted to destroy the wooden prisoner's barracks. But something similar took its place soon afterwards. When the city acquired the former camp in 1948 it began using the site as a municipal prison, replacing the old barracks with a new one in 1950. Meanwhile, the concentration camp's brick structures were kept intact, a few of them becoming administrative buildings. The most disturbing continuity was that some of the SS barracks were used to house prison employees. More of the former concentration camp was repurposed in this direction in the 1960s, when the city built another prison facility at the same location. It wasn't until 1989 that the city of Hamburg decided to relocate the prisons elsewhere, but it took until 2003 and 2006 for the two facilities to completely shut their doors (KZ-Gedenkstätte, 2018c).

While concentration camps and correctional institutions are no longer operational at Neuengamme, the area around it continues to be a site of ongoing racial violence. A

decade ago, Nora Räthzel (2008: 63) wrote that in Bergedorf it was common to hear stories of 'Nazis and foreigners' fighting each other and to witness far-right demonstrations. In 2012, during the dedication of a memorial at a former forced-labor factory in Bergedorf, a neo-Nazi attacked a group of elderly Holocaust survivors who had traveled from Poland to take part in the ceremony (*The Local*, 2012). Such violence has extended to those arriving from outside Europe. From December 2016 to October 2017, at least three refugee shelters in Bergedorf were attacked by arsonists, leaving the earth scorched (*Bergedorfer Zeitung*, 2017). While the motives of the attackers are unknown, they fit a growing trend in Germany of hostility towards migrants, including multiple recent arson attacks against refugee shelters (*BBC News*, 2017).

Contemporary Hamburg (Gefahrengebiete and refugee struggles)

As one of Germany's 16 states, the city of Hamburg is legally obligated to accept 2.5% of the total number of migrants seeking asylum in the country (Hentschel, 2018). In 2015, with Merkel's open-door policy on migration, over 61,000 migrants arrived in Hamburg, most seeking to escape civil wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Iraq (*ibid.*). Hamburg is currently home to 50,000 refugees, 30,000 of whom reside in public shelters across 150 locations (Baleo, 2017). Owing to a severe housing crisis and rapidly rising prices for apartments, decent housing is hard to find, and these temporary shelters include wooden houses, tents and shipping containers placed on unused parking lots, fields and sports arenas (Hill, 2015; Möbert, 2018).

The struggle for shelter has changed the shape of the city, transforming older structures to serve the needs of the displaced. In 2015 Hamburg became the first city in Germany to pass a law allowing the government to seize vacant commercial properties to house migrants (Rodriguez, 2015). Much commandeering has occurred, however, at non-

governmental levels. The organization *More Than Shelters* has worked with refugees repurposing Hamburg's exhibition halls, as well as an old warehouse in Bergedorf, into living spaces (MTS, 2018). Refugees have also found refuge in Hamburg's Schauspielhaus (theater) and churches in neighborhoods like St. Pauli (Heinemann, 2015; *Spiegel Online*, 2013). Despite these efforts, however, they have major difficulties in moving out of temporary shelters and camps into regular housing. This is especially the case for Black Africans, who are subject to racist discrimination from landlords (see e.g. Heinrich, 2013). A further hurdle is that of securing employment. In a recent study, of 1,067 refugees sampled across Hamburg, only 20 had jobs (Werner, 2017).

In addition to housing and income insecurity, migrants face the constant threat of violence. In early 2018, right-wing activists (with potential involvement from AfD) held a series of anti-Merkel rallies and demanded the closing of borders (*Welt,* 2018). Sometimes these sentiments have given rise to incidents of great danger for immigrants. In 2017, for example, a bomb exploded at the S-Bahn station in Veddel, where 70% of residents are immigrants. It had been planted by a neo-Nazi (*NDR*, 2017). Germany's interior ministry estimates that there were an average of nearly 10 attacks on migrants in Germany every day in 2016, nearly 1,000 of which targeted places that housed migrants (Paterson, 2016; Cullen and Cullinane, 2017). In that year 560 people were injured, including 43 children. On top of this there is the coercive force of the police, which, in Hamburg, has a history of racial and ethnic profiling (Gezer and Popp, 2013).

Hamburg's liberal elite and municipal authorities have attempted to distance the city from this racial violence through images of commercial openness. In 2017 the largest supermarket chain in Germany, Edeka, removed foreign-made products from the shelves of its Hamburg store for a day, replacing them with signs displaying anti-

xenophobic slogans, such as: 'This is how empty a shelf is without foreigners' (Worley, 2017). Despite these types of rhetorical support, however, those whose wealth has been built up or protected by Hamburg's commerce have back-tracked when some of the physical manifestations of migration encroach on private property. In the city's Blankenese district, one of the most affluent suburbs in Europe, for example, residents held a 'posh protest' in 2016 to oppose a planned refugee hostel (Paterson, 2016). During the demonstration, limousines and yachts on trailers were used to barricade the street where construction was set to begin. This was not an isolated incident but part of a growing campaign to keep refugee shelters out of wealthy Hamburg neighborhoods (see Hentschel, 2018).

In neighborhoods such as Sternschanze and St. Pauli, which were historically poor but are rapidly gentrifying, one is more likely to see supportive graffiti with messages such as 'Refugees Welcome' and inclusive organizations helping refugees, such as the St. Pauli Church and soccer team (Sparke and Mitchell, 2018). At the same time, these areas of the city have been labeled as highly risky and frequently targeted for special surveillance by the police. For example, they were among the districts designated as *Gefahrengebiete* in 2014 (see Figure 5). These so-called 'danger zones', covering three districts and over 50,000 people, were established following clashes between police and those protesting the closing of the Rote Flora Cultural Center, a home for autonomists since 1989. They draw on an older regulation introduced by the former interior minister of Hamburg in 2005, which, reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's earlier warnings about the Nazi era, placed large areas of Hamburg in a continual 'state of emergency' (Augustin, 2014). Among other things, residents and those passing through these neighborhoods could be stopped and searched without prior suspicion—a vast increase in police powers. These expanded powers also included the right to exclude people from the

area. During the short period January 4–13, 195 exclusion orders were issued, 66 people were taken into custody and 14 were given restraining orders or ordered to leave the area (Linek and Schaefer, 2014). The *Gefahrengebiete* designation (which was amended two years later, see Fengler, 2016) was widely criticized in Hamburg and beyond, not just for its abrogation of civil rights, but also for targeting as 'risky' areas that contained a large percentage of Black Africans and other refugees, evidence of police-based racial profiling at the municipal scale (Pichl, 2014; for a US comparison see Beckett and Herbert, 2010).
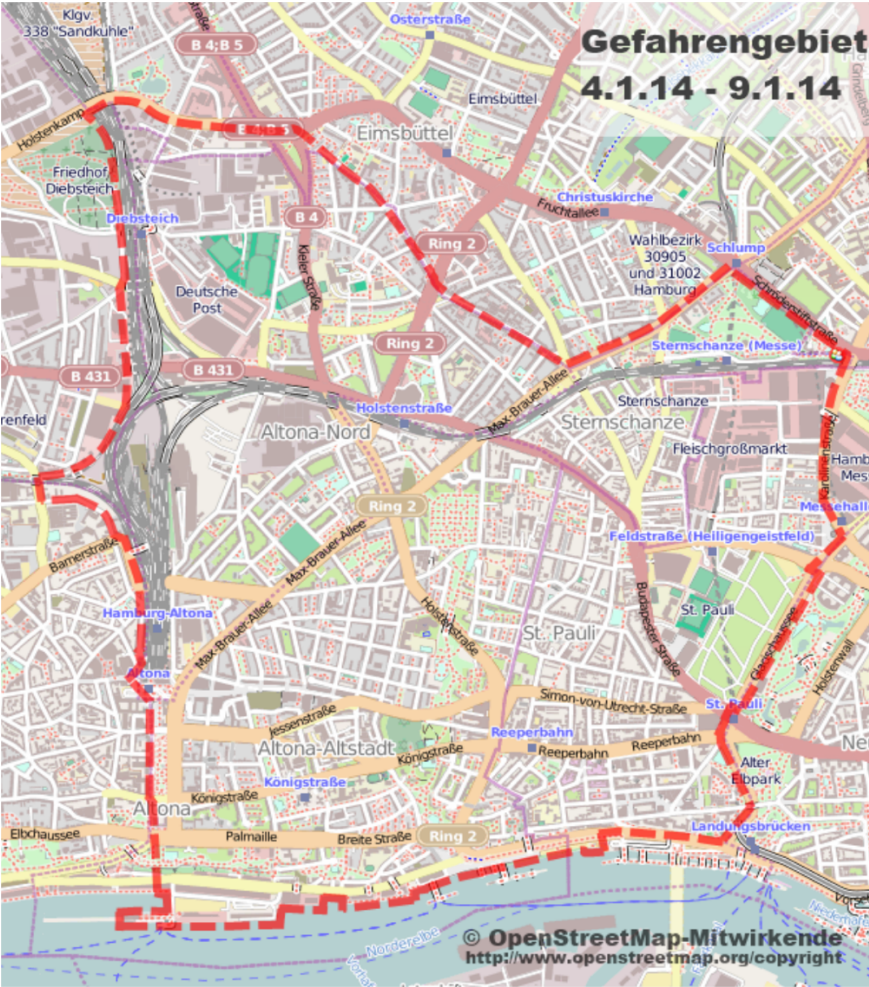

Figure 5. Hamburg's "danger zone" as enforced 4–9 January 2014 (the zone was reduced to three smaller "danger islands" on 9 January)

This racial violence was also manifested in the municipality's rejection of the claims of 300 Black African immigrants known as the Lampedusa in Hamburg solidarity group. These migrants arrived in Hamburg in 2013 after an arduous journey from Libya. Working primarily as guest workers in Libya they were expelled during the civil war and fled to Europe via the Mediterranean. Many were apprehended and taken to the island of Lampedusa, where they languished in sub-standard conditions until 2013, when the Italian authorities gave them money and a humanitarian permit to travel and work. Many made their way north to Hamburg and other cities in Germany (Meret and Della Corte, 2014).

The Lampedusa refugees believed they had the right to work and to move freely in Hamburg. But municipal authorities denied the validity of their work permits and, after their arrival, ended the emergency winter program for refugees, forcing them onto the city streets with no ability to find work or shelter in sub-zero conditions (*ibid.*). The city's inhumane approach to the group contradicted its outward-facing statements of tolerance and welcome, indicating that the only urban flows that were truly welcome were those of commodities and capital. While official declarations of welcome were contradicted in practice, this did not lead to victimhood or passivity on the part of the group. Aided by activists, faith-based organizations and city residents, the migrants formed a solidarity protest movement: Lampedusa in Hamburg. This movement was explicitly formed to publicize and contest the racial discrimination and ill treatment received by the group as a whole. In addition to resisting a politics of passivity, it also resisted the individualization of each migrant's claims on a case by case basis, as initially demanded by municipal authorities (*BBC News,* 2013). The movement insisted on representing the migrants' plight and claims as those of a collective unit, demanding

the right of the entire group to integrate into the city, with access to housing and employment similar to other refugees and urban residents.

The ongoing practices of resistance expressed by Lampedusa in Hamburg are evident in public statements, in news outlets (see e.g. Laufer, 2015; Baeck, 2016), on their Facebook Page, on Wiki, and on Twitter, as well as through the all-refugee soccer team FC Lampedusa Hamburg (Mohdin, 2015). They are also evident in the landscape itself, in spatial demonstrations and practices and temporary infrastructures such as a tent in the city center, where informational flyers and brochures are regularly distributed. While this tent has often been taken down by municipal authorities, the migrants and their allies have responded by replacing it time and again. The group has thus manifested a refugee agency that will not bend to the pressures of global city representations of a harmonious and frictionless plain devoid of conflict.

In particular, Lampedusa in Hamburg has fought hard against depictions of urban harmony that belie the constant racialization experienced by Black African migrants in the city and in the EU more generally. In numerous statements they have linked their own experiences of both macro and micro forms of aggression to wider struggles against European racism. They have, for example, emphasized the racial discrimination and hierarchies of global cities, highlighting the hypocrisy implicit in a rhetoric of welcome and tolerance that is rarely evident in everyday practices:

> The Lampedusa-Tent in [Lampedusa tent-in] has become the symbol of the inequality and degrading values in our so called 'welcoming' society. The gates have been open to some but remain closed to others. How can it be that, for over three years now, the African-War-Refugees from Libya are still refered (*sic*) to as 'illegals'? Black Africans are at the bottom of the refugee hierarchy that has developed in Hamburg. Racism and systemic

discrimination still persists in German asylum and immigration laws (Odugbesan, Facebook post, 2016).

As groups such as AfD and Pegida have grown in size and power, Lampedusa in Hamburg's posts on Facebook have tracked their effects on the everyday life of Black Africans living in the city, on incidents of police violence, as well as on the increasing numbers of detentions and deportations. The growing expressions of reactionary populism, xenophobia and racial violence in Germany are documented and discussed by the group and its allies on social media platforms that are shared both within and beyond the urban solidarity movement itself. Additionally, the site points to histories of racialization in Germany and worldwide, as well as to the struggles that individuals and communities have engaged in to contest these practices. This shared resistance across time and space includes expressions of interest and sympathy with broad-based organizations such as the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States, thus linking forms of racialization and 'hyper-nationalism' evident globally (Sparke and Mitchell, 2018). Their expressions of solidarity and ongoing practices of resistance across lines of individual, collective and geographical difference help to unite refugees with others who have been left out or exploited in global cities and the broader global economy. As Martin Bak Jørgensen notes (2017: 66), 'Their banners claim belonging to a broader united precariat'.

The Lampedusa in Hamburg movement provides a good example of alternative experiences and representations of Hamburg and global cities more generally. It refuses the erasure of conflict and difference, insisting that the stories of racialization and hierarchy remain visible in the spatial practices of urban residents and in the urban landscape itself. While these efforts may be minor and the narrative of dissent ultimately buried within a broader and more powerful story of welcome, progress and urban

tolerance, they provide flashes of inspiration for other struggles globally—the sparks of a real world openness.

Conclusion

This article has mapped some of the ways that spaces of danger are negotiated in the global city of Hamburg. Drawing on the pivotal work on time and memory by Walter Benjamin and Allan Pred, we have demonstrated how racializing forms of exploitation and violence are embedded, yet often obscured, in liberal capitalist notions of freedom and urban progress, and how they can be excavated and brought to light (Benjamin, 1968; Pred, 2004; see also da Silva, 2007; Melamed, 2011; Reddy, 2011). We have shown the importance of taking an archaeological approach to the urban, accounting for how a city's past is processed within the landscape to the benefit of an elite few, while erasing the histories, experiences and needs of others. In Hamburg this processing has spatialized a selective memory that recalls a tradition of commercial boosterism while forgetting how such a tradition has been bound up with the forced banishment of certain bodies from, and within, urban space—from the exclusion of minorities in early modern Hamburg, to concentration camps during the second world war, to zones of danger and racialized refugee experiences today.

In the case of the Stadthöfe renovation, as well as the posters, license plates and present-day refugee conflicts, we can see both the preferred urban image and the ever-present challenges—both historical and current—that constantly disrupt it. While Hamburg's elite is quick to distance the city from the re-emergence of xenophobic nationalism, its 'Gateway' identity as a cosmopolitan trade hub is built on the same racial capitalist foundations that gave rise to the AfD, foundations the city would prefer to keep obscured. Despite its polished and friendly facade, Hamburg constantly negotiates

and sublimates the tensions between racializing nationalist legacies and global capitalist imperatives, both past and present. In this article we have attempted to brush Hamburg's memory-landscape 'against the grain', to uncover and link up some of these spaces of danger. With the rise of the AfD, Pegida, and other far-right populist movements in Germany and elsewhere, it has become increasingly imperative to understand not only when—but also *where*—these eruptions occur. This article is one attempt to recollect these spaces of danger, not for history's sake, but so that they might be 'put to critical use' (Pred, 2004: xvii) for struggles today.

Of course, the examples discussed here are not all the same. It is misleading and dangerous to equate Nazi genocide with the ill-treatment of asylum seekers. This article has sought not to collapse but to interrupt and juxtapose spaces of danger, showing how there are multiple, and often conflicting, layers of temporality at play under global capitalism (Tomba, 2013). It is by excavating, recollecting and representing these violent moments and spaces that we may find the hidden links between them. For finding links in the past can help us map new constellations of resistance in the present. In Hamburg the demand for migrant rights is inseparable from, but not reducible to, the city's history of antifascism. Both forms of struggle are historically grounded in and against a global capitalist society that carves out a 'gateway to the world' for some and spaces of danger for others. They emerge out of the same urban landscapes of selective memory and violent exclusion. Where they converge is in the collective project to build a different kind of urban gateway, one whose criteria for entry are not determined by class or race, but left radically open.

Notes

[1] At the *Stadthöfe* complex, for instance, Gestapo history has literally been minimized and swept into a corner. After having originally promised in 2009 to set aside 1,000 square meters of space dedicated to commemoration, the developer's current plan is to have a 70-square-meter memorial, one that will be wedged into the back of a bookshop. As the memorial space gets smaller and smaller, the only other reference to Nazi violence at the *Stadthöfe* are two inconspicuous plaques and three bronze *Stolpersteine* (stumbling stones) representing Jews who were deported from the site (Connolly, 2018).

[2] There were some exceptions to this exclusion during the Weimar period (see Levine, 2013).

[3] There is no lasting record, however, of where the Neuengamme bricks actually ended up. Gutschow's closest assistant, Rudolf Hillebrecht, insists that none of them were ever used in any project directed by his boss (Diefendorf, 1985).

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