



## Tracing Cultural Memory

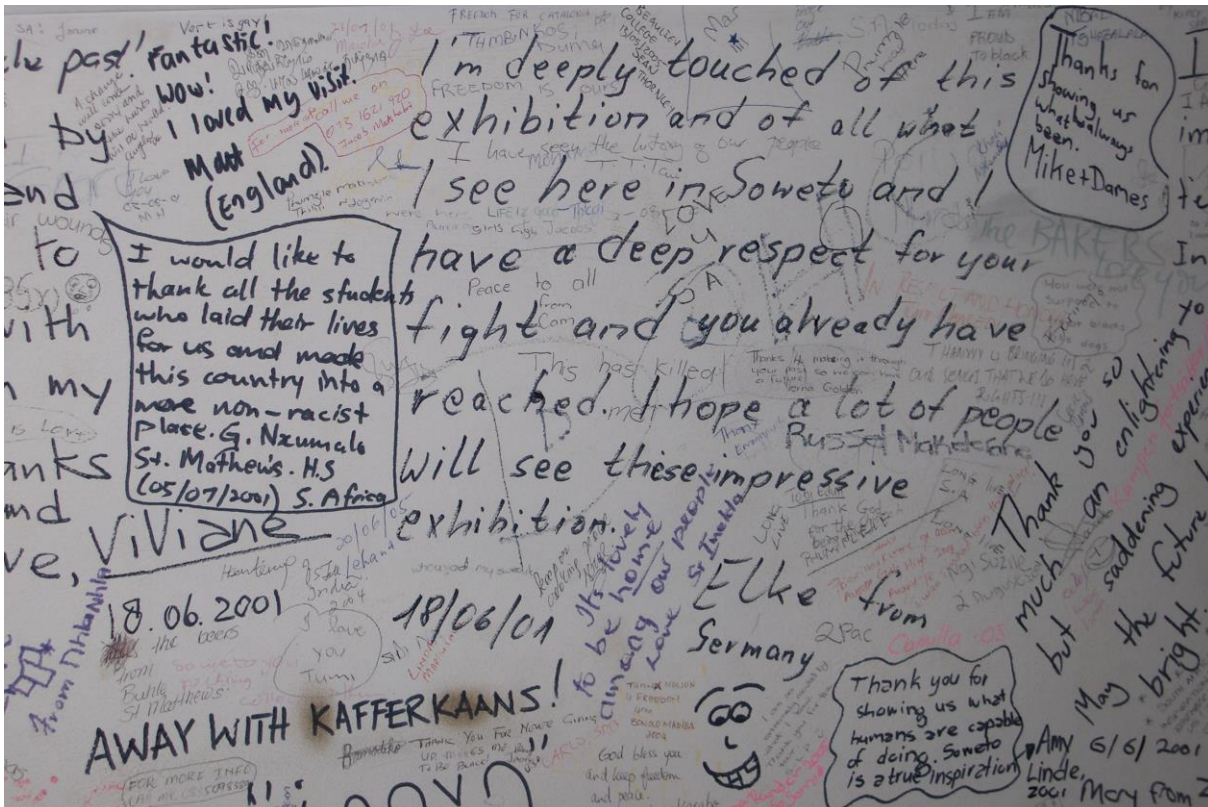
### Holiday snapshots at sites of memory in an actor-network perspective

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## PhD Thesis

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## Tracing Cultural Memory

Holiday Snapshots at Sites of Memory in an Actor-Network Perspective

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Titel og evt. undertitel: At spore den kulturelle erindring. Feriefotos af erindringssteder i et aktør-netværk-perspektiv

Title / Subtitle: Tracing Cultural Memory. Holiday Snapshots at Sites of Memory in an Actor-Network Perspective

Emnebeskrivelse: We encounter, relate to and make use of our past and that of others in multifarious and increasingly mobile ways. Tourism is one of the main paths for encountering sites of memory. This thesis examines tourists' creative appropriations of sites of memory – the objects and future memories inspired by their encounters – to address a question that thirty years of ground-breaking research into memory has not yet sufficiently answered: What can we learn about the dynamics of cultural memory by examining mundane accounts of touristic encounters with sites of memory?

Vejleder: Associate Professor Anders Ib Michelsen

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Fig. 1. Candice Mncwabe's Instagram post from Regina Mundi Church. 28 May 2014.



Fig. 2. Chris Barnum's Instagram post from Regina Mundi Church. 13 March 2013.

## 1. Introduction: Tracing Cultural Memory

Tourism is one of the main means for experiential encounters with commemorative sites, and it also generates a set of practices that mark and make such sites as meaningful and historically salient for both individuals and broader communities of belonging. (Joy Sather-Wagstaff 40)

The ways in which we encounter, relate to, and make use of our past or the past of others are multifarious and increasingly mobile. Memory is on the move, it is ‘unbound’ (Bond et al.), as the authors of one of the latest publications in Memory Studies state. It crosses and relates texts, people, places, and technologies. And it is famously entangled with the tourist practice, one of the main means for encounters with sites of memory, as Sather-Wagstaff argues in the quote above.

Departing from the tourists’ creative appropriations of sites of memory, i.e., the objects and memories-to-be that stem from an encounter with mediated memories at a site, this thesis turns to one question which remains to be answered despite all the ground-breaking research into memory during the preceding three decades: What can we learn about the dynamics of cultural memory when following the mundane, ordinary accounts and reactions which stem from encounters with sites of memory?

The following chapters all focus on visitor snapshots from an actor-network perspective, looking not only at the recording and becoming of the photograph – the practice of picturing and visual encounters with memories at sites – but also at the relations its visual content creates across visual culture. The thesis can be divided into two parts: The first part (Chapters 1 to 3) develops a cross-disciplinary methodology to grasp the situated work of visual-cultural memory making in the tourist practice by drawing from central concepts in actor-network theory (ANT). It highlights the distribution and transformation of sites and objects of memory through their mundane reception and collective appropriation. The second part (Chapters 4 to 6) further develops one crucial observation in dealing with appropriations in the work of cultural memory, namely the role of overlooking and the overlooked in the realm of the tourist picturing practice. It introduces the concept of *oversight* to describe modes of what I will call *productive absence*, which afford appropriation and make the work of



cultural memory particularly dynamic. Each section starts from an analysis of snapshots and follows their *tracing* activity in cultural memory.

The two Instagram posts to be seen on the page before last were listed by a recent Pikore search for #ReginaMundi, the most prominent memory site revisited in the chapters of this thesis. Both entries contain snapshots taken in the small exhibition space of the Regina Mundi Church in Soweto, home to the photographic exhibition ‘The Story of Soweto’. A young South African girl (fig. 1) poses with a framed photograph of Nelson Mandela, taken in 1994 by Jürgen Schadeberg on Robben Island during a visit of Mandela’s former prison cell. This frame, one that is supposed to hang on the exhibition walls but for some reason keeps on falling down, will recur in other snapshots in the course of this thesis, highlighting its different uses.

The travels of the frame indicate one of the two central concerns of this thesis, namely the life of the ‘stuff’ of memory, the role of the nonhuman in cultural remembrance. Where do we observe and how can we grasp the ‘agency’ of sites, objects, and materials of memory? If we look at the second post (fig. 2), for instance, Chris Barnum from the U.S. shares a photo of his own hash-tagged name-tag that he left on the exhibition walls, adding the text ‘Left my mark in a historical landmark’. Again, many things are set into motion in this post such as Chris’ pen and the changing surface of the wall. The snapshot indicates how tourists and visitors leave their marks at sites of memory and, in turn, how their snapshots let the site of memory leave a mark in different places and for different publics and thereby make the work of cultural memory dynamic, the second concern of this thesis.

These Instagram posts show two of the many ways in which the small photography exhibition ‘The Story of Soweto’ and its so-called ‘wall of remembrance’ have been received, appropriated and mediated, shared and translated in visitors’ snapshots. The thesis finds methodological tools that investigate the crucial role of these recorded encounters with a memorial site in the work of cultural memory.

### **Studying cultural memory today – a first approach**

The study of cultural memory is the study of remnants from the past which are to some degree portable, transferable, adaptable, and placeable; in short, translatable from one actor to the other, relating one person, place, thing, material, or time to the next or to another. As such it is the study of nameable, material – though not

necessarily always and in every state tangible – memory. It is the study of the *uses* and reuses of inscriptions that remind one of, point towards or make an account of the past. Cultural memory studies the ways in which these accounts *culturalize* and *socialize* with the effect of keeping memory work alive. It asks: How do sites of memory materialize in and motivate the crafting of further objects of memory (the cultural)? And how do these *appropriations* of mediated memories bind other actors and draw them towards them (the social)?

What has been gathering for the last two decades under the term ‘Cultural Memory Studies’ has so far mainly focused on the *human* communities and conflicts of remembering the past via its representations and mediations in ‘cultural objects’ or objects of so-called cultural heritage, often bound to a national framework.<sup>1</sup> Doing so, the studies often lose sight of the *nonhuman agency* in this venture, namely the influence and the work of mediating ‘materiality’, the ‘stuff’ of memory, the objects and sites of memory and the many traces and remnants of the past which traverse the human faculty of remembering. The underlying and often unquestioned definition of culture here refers to either a certain community of people bound to a particular territory, or to its crafted objects or sites of culture like buildings, goods, and of course artistic expressions. At the same time, this human work in cultural memory is rarely investigated anthropologically as that what people do with the stuff of memory, but often only discussed as the assumed or expected meaning of sites and objects of memory for a particular group. Detailed accounts of different people’s many interventions in, and active negotiations with, objects and scenes of *mediated memory* are often missing.<sup>2</sup>

What does this ask from Cultural Memory Studies and its methodologies? It calls for more research that, on the one hand, re-humanizes (Schorch 68) the reactions to sites and objects of memory and the world-making co-activity of ordinary people

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<sup>1</sup> Most studies draw their theoretical framework from either Maurice Halbwachs’ ‘*mémoire collective*’ and the assumption that no remembering takes place outside of social frameworks and their long-term symbolic patterns, or Jan Assmann’s ‘*kulturelles Gedächtnis*’, which, similar to Halbwachs’ account, stresses the unitary character of rituals, texts and practices for a particular group.

<sup>2</sup> While José van Dijck uses the concept of mediated memories as an analytical tool for personal ‘shoebox’ collections (*Mediated Memories* 1), I transport it back to the public scene and regard any representation of the past in media for cultural remembrance as precisely ‘mediated memories’.

in everyday ways.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, it needs to also pay attention to the agency of the objects and sites themselves and how they cross and are entangled with human memory work, to ‘humanize the inhuman’ (Lash and Lury 20). One field to investigate all activities in the public realm of communicating the past in objects and sites of memory is the tourist practice, or, in more general terms, visitors’ encounters with memorial sites and objects.<sup>4</sup> I am drawing on a notion of practice in line with Theodore Schatzki’s understanding of practices as being simultaneously entities and performances. The tourist practice involves a range of rituals understandable as nexus or entity of practices, but they need to be performed. This thesis focuses on the tourist encounter with intended or unintended sites of memory, the tourist’s appropriation of the encountered, and the traces this encounter leaves, such as the visual records stemming from it, in particular vernacular snapshots.

Nowadays, such records from people’s encounters with scenes of cultural memory are often instantly externalized via other media.<sup>5</sup> They are published through a service or on a platform on the Internet and potentially made available for many. This again makes the situation of following a co-working cultural memory even more complex, albeit somewhat ‘easier’ to research as it becomes ‘thoroughly traceable’ (Latour, “Beware”), as a number of machines, people, places and other gadgets and props are involved and related in what I call people’s *appropriations* of sites. Those appropriations, which are indeed memories of memories, remediations of mediations, are here also subsumed under the notion of mediated memories as they mediate a memory further via another memory, pointing towards the entanglement of memory, media, materiality, and technologies.

While often focusing on the experientiality of sites of memory, the important anthropological research already being done in this realm does not always include the mobile work and the socializing activities of these re-mediated memories, the

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that Cultural Studies and Visual Culture Studies have long focused on ordinary people’s everyday reactions to cultural products and on popular culture in general. Susanne Regener sums this up as follows (my translation): ‘Visual Culture Studies ask how images come into existence, who brings them to which places, what they effect and where they lead us’ (450), a conceptualization shared in this thesis.

<sup>4</sup> I am deliberately not referring to *tourism*, but to tourist practices, experiences, encounters, media, sites, etc. in this thesis to underline the per se instable and to-be-made character of this undertaking (see also Bärenholdt’s (111) argument for *tourist’s* instead of *tourism* destinations).

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Stiegler has discussed this act of externalizing memory under the notion of ‘hypomnesia’ whereby technologies make discrete – grammatize, he writes drawing from Derrida – the visible world (68f). It has also been discussed as ‘exteriorization’ (André Leroi-Gurhan) or ‘excarnation’ (Aleida Assmann). See Ruchatz (367) for a short summary.

materials, media and products of cultural memory themselves. This also points to the not-fully-fathomed human cultural mnemonic activities that nevertheless still outshine the object's own ways of cultural intervention into memory work. However, a trend can be observed in the humanities reaching also into the interdisciplinary field of the study of memory; this trend challenges these oversights, focusing on materiality and the 'agency' of the nonhuman.<sup>6</sup> I am drawing here on a notion of materialism as defined by Þóra Pétursdóttir in *Concrete Matters* (8):

[A] symmetrical recognition of the significance of encounter/ experience and of the ownness/integrity of that which is encountered – it always partly withdraws from view, and holds something in reserve; a materialism, thus, that contrary to its predecessors is able to embrace discontinuity, unpredictability and incompleteness.<sup>7</sup>

Related to the increasing role played by materiality is a focus on the entanglement of humans and technologies in the digital era and the relationality of their world-making activities, as outlined for instance in José van Dijck's notion of a 'culture of connectivity'. In her analysis of the nature of photo-sharing platforms, "Flickr and the Culture of Connectivity", van Dijck proposes that the study of photo sharing and digital memories needs to turn away from what she calls an 'anthropocentric concept' of collective memory to a 'culture of connectivity' where 'social interactions [such as photo sharing] and cultural products [such as the photos] are inseparably enmeshed in technological (...) systems' (404), that is 'thoroughly structured by entwined human-machine interactions' (402).

The presence and afterlife of things, including material snapshots, play an important role in the process and the dynamic of cultural memory – it is actually impossible to ignore things. Cultural memory studies therefore have to look for methodologies that take human and nonhuman agency equally seriously, or, as has been argued by actor-network theory (ANT) and other theories, to accept the inevitable entanglement and *symmetry* of the human and nonhuman in every cultural

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<sup>6</sup> See for example the work of Basu, Olsen, Pétursdóttir, Trigg and Guggenheim. A pioneer in the field of Cultural Memory Studies, Astrid Erll, also highlights the role of Aby Warburg's work as one of the two 'fundamental concepts of cultural memory' (Erll, *Memory in Culture* 19ff). Warburg's *Mnemosyne*, an inquiry into the agency of certain symbols in art transgressing decades of work and schools, is also a central reference when we come to think about the materiality of memory, and, especially, the afterlife of material images. See also Kristian Handberg's dissertation on retro 'between memory and materiality'.

<sup>7</sup> This definition also resonates in Katrina Schlunke's notion of 'memory effects'.

act of memory.<sup>8</sup> As this thesis will show, Bruno Latour's actor-network methodology offers a useful toolbox for inquiry into the transaction of human and nonhuman actors in cultural memory work and the lives of memory objects in particular.<sup>9</sup> Such 'objects' of cultural memory are not restricted to an old photograph, a camera or a ruin, and the 'subjects' of cultural memory are neither only a woman who has lived during apartheid or a heritage professional organizing an exhibition of her photographs in a museum or at a memorial site, but a 'hybrid actor composed' as Latour puts it ("On Technical Mediation" 32); material objects and human agents work together in acts of memory, composing cultural memory. Latour elaborates that 'the prime mover of an action becomes a new, distributed, and nested series of practices whose sum might be made but only if we respect the *mediating* role of all the actants mobilized in the list' (OTM 34). His notions of 'mediation' and 'mediator' are of specific interest for this thesis as they offer a methodological starting point to investigate and describe the active and creative role of ordinary people's accounts of encounters with sites and objects of memory (Chapter 2). They put in focus both the *practice* of vernacular photography and the *products* stemming from the encounter and the meshwork (Ingold) of humans and nonhumans at sites of memory.

Latour differentiates between intermediaries and mediators: While an intermediary 'simply transports meaning or force without transformation', mediators 'transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry' (*Reassembling* 39). I understand both translation and distortion in this context as a positive venture of and intervention into the ongoing dynamic of making use of the past.<sup>10</sup> This is of particular importance for the notion of *cultural* memory as it depends on such interventions as actualizations, on being used, negotiated, and made sense of *anew* at different times, for different people and in different places by means of mediation.<sup>11</sup> It also corresponds to what anthropologist

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<sup>8</sup> See for example Bruno Latour, "On Technical Mediation".

<sup>9</sup> The writings and studies that have been subsumed under the term actor-network *theory* offer to my understanding rather a methodological and terminological toolbox than an actual theory which is why I mainly use the term *actor-network methodology* in this thesis to reference to the work of Latour et al.

<sup>10</sup> There are other readings as well. van Dijck, for instance, draws on Latour's notion of mediator in a more negative fashion when arguing for the mediator's (here: Flickr's) capacity to intentionally (maybe even ideologically) repurpose semi-private images by arranging and connecting them via certain codes and algorithms ("Flickr" 412).

<sup>11</sup> As both Erll and Assmann note, we are dealing with symbolic representations and commemorative practices, which importantly depend on *actualization* (Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory" 112). Erll underlines: 'Just as sociocultural contexts shape individual memories, a "memory"

Tim Ingold (*Making*) in a similar vein to Latour has called ‘ways of making’. Ingold writes aptly that actors *respond to each other’s presence*. Life, according to him, is lived in correspondence (“Introduction” 14):

Human beings have their stories, of course, but so do animals, trees, mountains, mud and water, in so far as in their growth, movements and displacements they continually and mutually respond to each other’s presence – or in a word, they correspond.

While Latour is strictly interested in human-nonhuman *relations* and the entanglement of both in meaningful (or rather functioning) acts, the agency of the nonhuman itself, defined as the transformative work that objects do with *other* objects, does not really play a role in ANT.<sup>12</sup> The question at stake in this thesis is therefore three-sided, not only asking what do people do with memory stuff, but also what does the stuff make people do with it and what does it do when ‘being left alone’.<sup>13</sup>

### **Material: Holiday snapshots at sites of memory**

In the making of and the encounter with sites of memory, the visual plays a particular role and offers a platform to the researcher to investigate acts and constellations of cultural memory work. The main actor I chose to follow in my different case studies to look at how cultural memory *networks* is the ordinary tourist snapshot at intended or unintended sites of memory, and, in connection to that, the sight-seeing practices and technologies with which it is entangled. I thereby seek to visualize the particular material visibility of cultural memory, a visibility which involves practices of seeing, picturing, not seeing, overlooking, not picturing and importantly encountering a certain site together with a range of things.

The two central sites are the above introduced photography exhibition at the Regina Mundi Church in Soweto, South Africa, and Blaavand beach in Jutland, Western Denmark, home to the ruins of Second World War bunkers. Importantly these two sites are not only and not foremost ‘tourist sights’ or ‘sites of memory’

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which is represented by media and institutions must be actualized by individuals, by members of a community of remembrance (...). Without such actualizations, monuments, rituals, and books are nothing but dead material, failing to have any impact in societies’ (*Companion* 5). Though notably, only a human being (who is furthermore part of a particular community of remembrance) is recognized as such an agent of actualization in Erl’s reading.

<sup>12</sup> Ian Hodder in *Entangled* (93) and Bjørnar Olsen in *In Defense of Things* (149) have also indicated this.

<sup>13</sup> The latter aspect also includes to ‘valu[e] things by letting them be [silent] in their material otherness’ (Pétursdóttir, “Concrete Matters” 48).

respectively. Many different actors interact here on a daily basis, performing a number of rituals that we would not immediately allocate to the work of memory. Furthermore, the sites are also left to themselves at times and to their more 'natural' transformation in the rhythms of the nonhuman.

The material on which this thesis is based has been co-produced and gathered at different sites and times. A huge part of it was compiled as part of my fieldwork visit to Southern Africa in June/July 2012. Here I mainly worked with observations and their documentation, informal group discussions and individual interviews, both spontaneous, short inquiries at tourist sights and planned, longer inquiries at guesthouses. Unfortunately, most of the recorded material got lost when I was robbed towards the end of my visit and most of my data storage devices (and the recording device itself) were taken away. This is also the reason that there is no conventional appendix with transcripts and the like to this thesis and why I almost solely quote from memos rather than from original conversations, as these had to be recalled from my own memory. The putative loss was on the other hand also a gain which made the thesis develop further as I suddenly became almost exclusively dependent on others' visual material, which I had to find elsewhere, tracing it through many sites and media and via the contacts I had made.

I spent time in Windhoek, Namibia and Soweto, South Africa, but decided not to take the Namibian material into account for this thesis as it pointed towards other equally important and complex historical issues that would go beyond the scope of this work. Earlier interviews about photography practices with young Danish tourists in East Africa in 2011 also feed into some of the thoughts developed here. Last but not least I have continuously drawn from my family's photography shoeboxes and data storage devices (1982-2007) as well as observations during several trips to Blaavand beach between 2011 and 2015.

As has become clear by now, I locate a particular importance in mundane, ordinary acts of making sense of the past, of appropriating a certain object or site of remembrance. Next to many others, van Dijck ("Mediated Memories" 262) emphasizes the 'individual deployment of media technologies and practices as an active memory tool' in her discussion of the role of personal documents for the study

of memory.<sup>14</sup> We find such memory tools also in the tourist venture of encountering and experiencing sights, the products of which potentially become mediators as well in the Latourian sense as active agents that negotiate and translate memories and the past in the present. The research presented here takes tourist photography out of its ‘home mode communication’ to which it is often assigned and reduced. I believe that ordinary snapshots at sites of memory contribute to the work of cultural memory beyond the private and hidden realm of the personal shoebox.

### **The visual in cultural memory: a *transvisuality***

Visuality is understood here in accordance with Hal Foster’s seminal definition as ‘how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing or the unseen therein’ (ix). Visuality has been described by most authors as the way in which vision is ‘culturally constructed’ (Rose, *Visual Methodologies* 6) or discursively terminated (Foster). While I acknowledge that we see differently depending on who and where we are, I attempt to anchor the composition and the relationality of the visual prior to a particular influence of differential categories of culture like race, class, gender, or nation which are said to construct vision. It is the interplay of visuality and materiality and their mutual enabling that I focus on instead, pursuing a research that is, as Rose and Tolia-Kelly write in *Visuality/Materiality*, ‘a concern with *ecologies of the visual* where the co-constitution of visuality and materiality is situated within networks, hierarchies and discourses of power’, while I mainly stress the network aspect.

In the context of cultural memory work, where the communication of absences in the present is central, the unseen and overlooked, but also the uncommon and ignored in the visual field play a particular role. This is why, as will be shown, the agency of visual absence on the one hand and of overlooked though visible presence of the past in mediated memories on the other hand, characterizes the range of the ‘unseen’ (Foster) in the visuality of cultural memory. I am introducing the notion of *oversight* as a concept in the second part of this thesis (Chapters 4 to 6) to comprehend the ways in which presence and absence as well as visibility and invisibility entangle in cultural memory work and the tourist picturing practice at sites

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<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the study of vernacular photography, especially family photography, has become a major topic across disciplines, see for example Marianne Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze*; Mette Sandbye, “Looking at the family photo album”; Jonas Larsen, “Families Seen Sightseeing”, and many others.



of memory. In the course of the writing of this thesis I have developed four modes of ‘oversight’ manifesting in the visualization of absent pasts, the encounter with invisible or overlooked traces from the past, or the recognition of formerly overlooked sites of memory in the memory work of the snapshot.

How is an analysis of the visual in the mundane work of cultural memory traceable and assembled? What do visual products as visual objects of memory tell us about the associations they make and the network they create, support, or even dissolve?<sup>15</sup> The visual here becomes a ‘constant traversal’ of practices, technologies, things and people, of ‘different publics and communities, bodies and media’ (Michelsen et al. 4): it is in fact *transvisual*.<sup>16</sup> The *trans-* marks a process of binding. It points to the entanglement of images and other visual products with the scenes of their production and conception, their perception, and embodied experience. It describes the journeys of a visual product in a visual culture by visual means, such as the snapshot of a photograph presented on a screen in figure 1 or even the snapshot of another person looking at an exhibited photograph. The ‘transvisual’ thus also and importantly includes the visual techniques, technologies, and devices and their ways (screens, programs, apps, etc.) of shaping visual objects and materials as well as the practices of externalizing these visual accounts further. It therefore describes the many levels and ways of the entanglement of the material with the visual.

The tourist practice is constituted by practices of encountering, viewing and appropriating sights and visual mediated memories in yet new visual products and materials. The tourist’s visualizing practices translate visible scenes into other visual products, which in turn transform the public view on these sights. A lot of actors, practices, and things are co-working and *networking* in cultural memory’s visuality in the tourist practice. To grasp and to visualize this complex situation we need to think in a methodology of the visual that I call transvisual, highlighting the manifold traversal of the constitution of and the meeting with the visual in a visual culture.

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<sup>15</sup> I am thinking for example of the national framework losing influence in the formation of cultural memory and in the visual forms it circulates.

<sup>16</sup> See Michelsen, Kristensen and Wiegand’s 3-volume anthology *Transvisuality. The Cultural Dimension of Visuality*, especially the Introduction to *Volume 2: Visual Organizations*, for a detailed definition. Transvisuality as deployed in this thesis does not coincide (though maybe slightly overlap for the sake of similar research concerns, namely the reception of art and culture) with Dibosa’s definition of the transvisual as transmigrants’ ways of ‘seeing on the move’.

If we think back to the two Instagram posts: where and how are those visual-practices-leading-to-photographs-cum-posts situated in cultural memory work? I will start with the making of the second snapshot (fig. 2). With the help of a pen Chris wrote his name on one of the exhibition walls and describes this act as an inscription into tomorrow's experience of history. With the help of another prop, namely his camera phone or tablet, Chris takes an image of his inscription, and with the help of yet more services – the keyboard on his camera device, an Internet connection and the Instagram app on his device – inscribes the inscription onto the Internet. Other people comment on it and contextualize the entry in different ways. Apparently many others, next to Chris and Candice, are part of and act in the whole process of visualizing encounters with the exhibition and making them traceable on visual surfaces. Very prominent in this venture are of course the recording devices and sometimes another person taking the photograph, furthermore an Internet connection, some location detection software, the tourist/visitor-photographer-Instagram-user's hands typing in hash tags and pressing the 'post'-button, additionally another screen is required at the receiving ends of these posts, namely my own computer screen and keyboard via which I searched the net for snapshots. This supports van Dijck's predicament that the 'networked memory' which is at stake in the digital age 'requires a new understanding of agency where minds and techniques are intertwined' ("Flickr" 402).

Now I have only barely started to refer to everything happening *in* the pictures, and everything we might guess happened at the moment the pictures were taken and is happening now and then, yesterday and tomorrow in the very same location, such as the further travels of the frame with Mandela's photograph that keeps on falling off the wall. All of this is part of the relations that the snapshot makes and part of the transvisual movements of cultural memory at the Regina Mundi Church.

Through a disentangling of snapshot situations, we get a grasp of the symmetry of mnemonic action (Latour) and the co-responsive work of the visual (Ingold). Together with its entanglement with the material it describes the *transvisual*. The different actors involved are not only the human ones such as the international tourists and domestic 'tourists for a day', but also the name tags themselves and the graffiti they build up, and next to that of course a range of images – actual framed photographs like the one of Mandela, new snapshots of them on the screens – and

finally the walls, the cameras and other recording devices. Every act of publicly taking part in symbolic remembering is entangled with and enabled by a variety of things and technologies. Trying to save a memorable encounter for the future, or simply to take a nice snapshot to let the moment last, is only enabled by cameras or notebooks, pens and paper, the operated and operating props, the techniques and tools that initiate, motivate, and eventually mediate a certain act of memory by a human and that, furthermore, ‘carry’ certain memories and remainders beyond an individual person’s life and experience, externalizing it.

Memory making has become so much more assigned with technology, especially a technology of recording-along. The German term *mitschneiden* encompasses the two levels involved: life happening, and the recorder trying to grasp this process *while* and *alongside* (‘mit-’) it is happening; a cultural practice that tries to tie technological recording as close to instant human living perception as possible. On the other hand, the term ‘*schneiden*’, literally ‘cutting’ (or ‘editing’ in audio-visual media contexts), refers to a process of mediation as transformation, a recording-while-editing of a certain narrative of how life happens, creating one’s own image of it.

What does this make of *cultural* memory? First it exists in a joint act by many actors: it is not only the photographer or the material framed image alone who ‘remember’ – every cultural mnemonic action takes place as joint action, co-responding, reacting to another and making further relations. Second, it is not least the screen via which we see these snapshots and the sights of memory they show which lets us guess at a particularly interesting role of the visual herein.

### **Studying the tourist practice and cultural memory**

The thesis looks at two very different ‘sites of memory’ – the one an intended memorial site for the commemoration of a difficult heritage, the other one an unintentional remainder from a likewise difficult past. However, Sather-Wagstaff’s quote above remains valid for both: ‘Tourism is one of the main means for experiential encounters with commemorative sites’. Sites in the sense of destinations and locations have played an important role in both memory and tourism studies,

where research into the *making of space* was particularly prominent in cultural geography's study of tourism.<sup>17</sup>

While tourist routes often follow prescribed patterns, they are never fully predictable, nor ever exactly the same, and of course do not only cater to one type of tourist or visitor. Being in, reading of, seeing and experiencing a formerly unknown place always means to stroll in and encounter other, that is unexpected, views, which can mean in consequence being moved by them in unexpected ways. People occupy their environment in manifold ways, they make sense of it while moving through it and inscribe the encountered space in different ways, as Nancy Munn puts it: 'humans write in an enduring way their presence into surroundings' (quoted in Low 14).<sup>18</sup> They don't do it alone but alongside and assisted by technical devices and other props. Likewise, the surroundings as well as proper tourist sights have an impact on and potentially *afford* tourists' inscriptions: it is the interplay of people, sites and materials that is of interest here and that needs further attention in our research practice.

The manifold, increasingly audio-visual, recordings made of the tourist experience<sup>19</sup> in the form of photographs or short video clips and travelogues potentially take on a life of their own, circulating on super-national scales and adding to the cultural *memoryscape* of a place or a past incident. By *memoryscape*, a term I have used in the early stages of this research, I mean the gathering of views of mediated memories and their traces in recordings, which become yet other memories and thereby potentially re-inform others' encounters with this memory.<sup>20</sup> We learn of pasts through such 'recorded scenes', narratives that draw a picture for us of

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<sup>17</sup> See in particular the work of David Crouch ("Surrounded by Place") and Tim Edensor ("Performing Tourism, Staging Tourism"; "Rhythmanalyzing the Couch Tour") drawing from Nigel Thrift's non-representational theory and Henri Lefebvre's *rhythmanalysis*.

<sup>18</sup> This complex has been researched as the performance and practice, the doing of tourism, see, for instance, Crouch et al., *The Media and the Tourist Imagination: Converging Cultures*. On tourism and appropriation of memory/ consumer culture see Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History* and "Memory, Consumerism and Media", Joy Sather-Wagstaff, *Heritage that Hurts*, and, on tourism and imagination, see Noël Salazar and Nelson Graburn, *Tourism Imaginaries*.

<sup>19</sup> There already exists an immense body of literature on tourism and photography, tourist picturing practices and the performance of photography, reaching also into the field of family photography in general, see, for instance, Picard and Robinson, *The Framed World*, Urry and Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, Larsen, "Families Seen Sightseeing", Crang, "Picturing Practices", Larsen and Sandbye, *Digital Snapshots*.

<sup>20</sup> I understand 'memoryscape' in its literal meaning as memory shaped (getting my clue from Ingold's introduction to *Imagining Landscapes* (2), where he notes that the literal meaning of landscape is indeed land shaped), a *memoryscape* refers to cultural memory shaped visibly in an emerging spatiovisual formation, connecting places, objects, people, the visual material stemming from their encounters, and how they are moving and being set in motion.

something we didn't experience ourselves. These memory-(net)-works themselves modify remembrance through their intermediary and especially their mediating function – they help us imagine in particular other's pasts and the role this past plays for the present and the future. They furthermore invite us to take part in this memory work, describing and inscribing its spaces, making ourselves and our 'share' visible in the memoryscape.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the affordance of mediated memories at sites of memory themselves, their 'moving' qualities, motivates these recordings and engagements – some more than others as I will show.

Studies of tourist practices and the making of destinations have also turned to memory in its different forms and media: Cultural memory is here either discussed as the representations of cultural heritage encountered on tour, or studies point out the (often not further explicated) importance of the tourist's memories of a trip, and herein often the souvenirs that travel back home with the tourist.<sup>22</sup> My approach to the relationality of memory and the tourist experience is to combine both strands – forms of cultural heritage and what is taken home from the encounter with them – and then seeing where they interact and why the one is tied to the work of the other. Tourists' memories in the form of photographs or travelogues have long accompanied tourist studies, famously in John Urry's formulations of a tourist gaze (and its various scholarly appropriations), but also in Regina Bendix' studies on narrativity and the tourist experience that inspired Marcela Knapp and my own work on how travellers perform aspired identities through their travelogues (Knapp and Wiegand 2010 and 2014).<sup>23</sup>

Though many scholars, as the following quote by Bærenholdt (122) shows, by now underline that 'the impact of the tourist visit is mostly through the memories of the visit, through photos, souvenirs, events and experiences recalled at another place with other people', very few follow these memories and how they entangle the tourist experience and the encountered tourist sight, what this is meant to communicate and

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<sup>21</sup> Important theoretical work on the forms and ways of engagement with others' memories has been done by Jill Bennett in *Empathic Vision*, and Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering in *The Mnemonic Imagination*.

<sup>22</sup> For an overview on the concept of memory in tourism studies see Birgit Braasch.

<sup>23</sup> See also the work of Edward M. Bruner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, in particular, "Transformation of Self in Tourism", Laurajane Smith, "Moments, Instances, Experiences", and, on tourism, memory, and imagination specifically, see Amanda Lagerkvist, "Gazing at Pudong" or Kevin Hetherington and Beatrice Jaguaribe, "Favela Tours".

what it pushes into socializing acts in further networks.<sup>24</sup> The focus of this thesis is therefore explicitly on the *tracing* of different objects and acts of memory and the *reassembling* of cultural memory, departing from and following the tourist snapshot. Van Dijck rightly argues that ‘between present experiences and future memories stands a complex structure of technological, social, economic and institutional mechanisms’ (“Flickr” 413). But before jumping to these mechanisms that are somewhat external to the image itself – nevertheless playing an important part and being entangled with it – it is productive to also take the snapshot seriously for a moment and to look at its life and the associations that its content makes, all that which it visibly traces, that it tracks and records.

‘It is a curious fact’, writes Felicity Picken in an article about the role of tourist snapshots in tourism scholarship, ‘that very few tourist photographs are included in tourism research despite the importance of the claims that are built upon them’ (246). Studies are seen as ‘jumping from photography to representational worlds and skipping over the photographs’ (251). In most research on tourist photographs or tourism and visual culture in more general terms, tourists are often ‘*accused* of gathering little more than photographic souvenirs that are mindless in their replication of destination imagery’ (Picken 248). But tourist snapshots do not only reflect the ‘search for the picturesque’ (Bal, *Acts of Memory*, xi) that is often associated with the tourist practice and its allochronic search for the exotic Other in a non-contemporary exotic country, denying the coevality of that Other (Fabian 148).

Picken for instance underlines ‘the openness of the event of taking a photograph while on holiday, and where photographs are less sedentary, more mobile and capable of effecting meaning in unexpected ways’ (247-248). The decisive moment when doing research on tourist picturing practices and the actual realized snapshots lies in exactly these unexpected, surprising forms that a picture can take and the relations it makes. When it comes to found images of a certain site of memory, the externalized memories of tourists shared in certain publics can also act beyond the original intention of their author: the snapshots gain a life of their own.

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<sup>24</sup> The work of Jonas Larsen is one of the exceptions, see, for instance, “Practices and Flows of Digital Photography”; “The (Im)Mobile Life of Digital Photographs”; and Larsen and Urry, Chapter 7. See also, though not directed at memory work specifically, Gómez Cruz and Meyer who, departing from Larsen’s work, apply a Latourian framework to their study of iPhone-photography.

The framework of the thesis ties in with recent calls in memory studies to recognize the ‘hybrid and dynamic nature of memory’ (Silverman 4) and finding ways to map and research the transmediality and transculturality of histories and memories and the practices of remembering and remediating tied to them. Different researchers have lately called these transitions in the formation and figuration of memory ‘connective memory’ (Hoskins), ‘palimpsestic memory’ (Silverman), or ‘memory assemblage’ (Reading). In the course of this shift to an assembling perspective on cultural memory, authors also turn to actor-network theory, such as Sharon Macdonald in “Reassembling Nuremberg” (118). Conceptualizing heritage itself as assemblage, she highlights the techniques of ‘achieving and maintaining heritage’: ‘Taking an assemblage perspective on heritage directs our attention less to finished heritage products than to *processes* and *entanglements* involved in their coming into being and continuation’ (my emphasis).

Fiona Cameron and Sarah Mengler in a similar attempt propose a re-interpretation and revision of archival formations by focusing on the agency of heritage objects and their circulation in the visual realm of digital heritage contexts. Drawing from new materialism and actor-network theory, they question current ontologies of heritage objects and posit that cultural heritage is rather ‘reformulated as a mobile assemblage of things’ (60f). Laurajane Smith furthermore has been challenging the idea of heritage as a thing (7), highlighting its nature as a process, and herein the moments of engagement with, for example, tourists:

One of the things tourists *do* is lay down memories, not only in terms of recollecting and recounting their adventures on return home but also in the forms of photos, diaries, travel blogs and so forth. Moreover, as tourists travel and engage with cultural and heritage sites/sights they are also recollecting – and thus remaking – their understandings of what they are seeing and performing.

Tourist practices are entwined with the assembling of heritage in manifold ways. Smith refers to the tourist’s ‘laying down of memories’ in ‘moments of engagement’ (7) with heritage as expressed in the act of taking photographs or souvenirs. Þóra Pétursdóttir (42), when discussing the lure of discarded industrial ruins and the *Ruinenlust* (‘desire for ruins’) they are invested with, assigns the traveller a creative curiosity engaging with discarded sites which do not belong to the usual tourist landscape, places that fall under Harald Kimpel’s notion of *Übersehenswürdigkeit*, a

sight-worth-overlooking, a notion that I turn to in the second part of this thesis.

Next to this contemporary focus on materiality and entanglement, every recent collection of essays in memory and visual culture also asserts the ‘awareness of memory’s processual and mediated nature’ (Shevchenko 6). What rarely happens, though, is that researchers actively disentangle the processes and media involved; the various chapters of this thesis therefore made this their main concern and look into how and where the stuff of memory is processed and mediated and, importantly, what might afford this mediation and how it travels on to create unique relations. How do we ‘make something our own’, take something out of an encounter and an experience, and form new individual memories? No one can ever say for sure what from which encounter with an other’s past a memory really adheres, as experiences we have linger on and never show exactly how they influence us. Sometimes they come up after weeks, or we notice years later that something has kept on working inside us. Direct reactions to sites of memory taking the form of visible inscriptions – like a guestbook entry or tags on a ‘wall of remembrance’ (see Chapters 2 and 3) – might not be permanent impressions, they still offer one part of a manifold answer to the question of how the actual *work* of cultural memory is being done.

Though highlighted by most researchers, processes of actualization and appropriation, the actual uses and reuses of the stuff of memory, are rarely discussed and traced in detail. The work of anthropologists like Joy Sather-Wagstaff or Emma Waterton and Laurajane Smith are all examples of empirical research which focuses on the experientiality of heritage and memory. My specific focus (and access) is less the phenomenological encounter with memorial sites, the experientiality underlined by the aforementioned researchers, than the formation of new objects and media, the traceable memories these encounters bring forth themselves in the event of the visual.

Ann Rigney considers such ‘memories of memories’ to some degree in her concept of a ‘working memory’ which, she writes, ‘is continuously performed by individuals and groups as they recollect the past selectively through various media and become involved in various forms of memorial activity’ (“Plenitude, Scarcity” 17). I propose to further add to this notion the perspective of the material heterogeneity of all memory work: the working memory is composed by nonhumans



and humans alike, which makes the various media that Rigney mentions active agents in the work of memory.<sup>25</sup>

All these ventures into the remembrance of the past define the ‘cultural’ and connect it to the visual in particular: it is the effect of visualized encounters of scenes of remembering, engaged by media and other techniques, that become cultural techniques through participation and sharing, crossing and entangling the individual and the collective, the official and the vernacular, the public and the private. Cultural memory is a co-enacted performance and composition of everyday remembrance and the material accounts stemming from it. It reaches in and out of mediated memories in the encounter with those things and locations which make memory publicly accessible.

What does it mean then, to trace cultural memory in our research practice, as the title of this thesis indicates? To trace some thing, person, or constellation implies, on the one hand, to come across and encounter tracks and hints. On the other hand, it involves active pursuit, the following of different indications, tracking acts and accounts. If something can be traced, it is sharable and also visible, track-able to some degree. Furthermore, things that we trace have also been on the move, it is in fact their own movements which they make traceable. I trace the associations of the tourist practice, memory and the visual (i) via the observable scenes of encounter between (sites of) mediated memories and visitors, (ii) via visitors’ sharable, visual reactions to and memories of this encounter, and (iii) via the transformations of the sites themselves manifest in visitors’ appropriations of it.

### **Interlude: Critical tourism studies? From colonial continuities to composition**

The critic is not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles. The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of naïve believers, but the one who offers participants arenas in which to gather. The critic is (...) the one for whom, if something is constructed, then it means it is fragile and thus in great need of care in caution.

(Latour, “Why has Critique Run out of Stream?” 246)

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<sup>25</sup> The ‘agency’ of objects and media of memory, like photographs, has been mentioned and touched upon by Sturken and Cartwright in *Practices of Looking* and WJT Mitchell in *What do Pictures Want?* for instance, though none of them goes into further detail. Ann Rigney in another article also opens up towards such an understanding by drawing on Alfred Gell’s notion of the artistic work as agent in its own right (“The Dynamics of Remembrance” 349); see also Amani Maihoub, “Thinking through the Sociality of Art Objects”, and Edwards and Hart’s work on the photograph’s materiality.

Research into cultural memory and heritage has mingled with a range of ‘post’-terms since the 1990s, such as post-heritage, post-critical, post-nation, and, of course, the postcolonial. Those concepts and analytical tools are rather less facts than ‘matters of concern’ which any inquiry, especially every empirical one, into what matters in cultural memory work proves. This project originally set out to map an ongoing colonial (humanist and universalist) disposition in Western tourists’ accounts of travelling in the Global South impacting on the general image of the latter in the world, and in the Global North in particular. It asked how unfinished histories of colonialism and Western expansion are continuously performed or even re-enacted in what I called the postcolonial tourist practice and thereby remembered, though not openly negotiated and named. These acts of unconscious commemoration draw from a concealed shared difficult heritage of colonialism, distributed and confirmed over cultural mnemonic forms in the Global North and the world at large.

My research departed from the claim that relatively fixed imaginaries, rooting in a colonial mindset, influence the Western tourist practice and understanding of Self and encountered Other.<sup>26</sup> In the continuing performance of a colonial elegance against a more or less visible ‘imperial debris’ (Stoler), we can detect forms of an imagined colonial nostalgia.<sup>27</sup> The notion of cultural memory that I was drawing on was more related to Jan Assmann’s conceptualization of this as ‘concretion of identity’; cultural memory according to Assmann is ‘the store of knowledge [text, rituals, practices] from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity’ (“Collective Memory” 130). This is the case when White Europeans are (not) dealing with their colonialist inheritance but still build and act on the once forcefully implemented power relations – the continuity of colonial power – and profit from them in manifold ways.

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<sup>26</sup> Graburn and Gravari-Barbas (162) make an apt definition in the Introduction to a special issue of *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* on imaginaries: ‘the touristic colonial imaginary is an appeal to those who never experienced the grittiness of colonial realities, to come and “play” colonialism without guilt or hope of return. This fantasy promises the tourist status enhancement where they will be treated like landed gentry or colonial masters’.

<sup>27</sup> Appadurai in “Disjuncture and Difference” speaks about ‘nostalgia without memory’ (30) which applies when tourists for example imagine a colonial past that they never experienced themselves; Simon Lewis highlights in *White Women Writers* this ‘continual recycling of colonial nostalgia’ (7) in contemporary literature and media in general. See also Lagerkvist on mediated memories of Shanghai as colonial nostalgia (160) and the ‘chronotope of nostalgic dwelling’ (165) in the tourist experience of the city.

The tourist practice is one of the more popular stages for North-South encounters (another one would be art event travel) on which the traveller can perform a distinguishable identity and self-image. This is being done both by projecting racializing and exoticizing fantasies on an imagined Other and by performing a particular transformed personality for audiences at home.<sup>28</sup> The doctoral project's aim was to map and critically reflect on continuities of colonial performances in the tourist practice and postulated the existence of a *colonial cultural memory* as a widely untreated, cultural schema of understanding Western Self and African Other.<sup>29</sup> It set out to trace this schema and how it feeds into the Global North's memory work and inherent acts of forgetting, remembering, mis/recognizing and re-imagining collective ideas of belonging. Importantly, the project also wanted to point out interventions into the dominant schema, offering *Other* views on the scene.<sup>30</sup>

This outline of this research project has changed not least because reality did not readily, or better not solely, confirm these 'results' in the observable encounters of people, places, and objects at tourist sights in Southern Africa and at sites of their distribution and mediation, like photo platforms online, social networks, or even the fireside at the end of a busy day on tour. My observations in Soweto rather revealed other interesting associations transcending clear-cut group formations like 'the White mobile European' or the 'local exploited African'. It showed the need to start from particular cases, from individual people, media and objects in a certain situation rather than entering 'the field' with a clear-cut idea of its predetermined structure and happenings, in the words of Law and Hetherington: 'To address global concerns it is often best to be local, specific and material' (36).

The local situations, which particularly messed up my clear-cut empirical field for critique, were all connected to the tourist practice at some kind of memorial or heritage site. What I noticed is that in particular at sites of memory, making up an increasing amount of the sights visited by domestic and international tourists in Soweto, the memory work at play presents itself as multidirectional (Rothberg). Different non-competitive discourses and layers of individual and shared mnemonic

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<sup>28</sup> See Alex Gillespie, "Time, Self and the Other"; as well as Marcela Knapp's and my own work on this topic; "Wild Inside" and "Seductions of the Travelogue".

<sup>29</sup> The corresponding methodology would have drawn mainly from Cultural Studies approaches to visual material and the production of the visual, see Lister and Wells for an overview.

<sup>30</sup> See my "The Postcolonial Tourist Practice".

forms overlap and naturally go beyond simply feeding into a colonial nostalgia. Next to the discourse of coloniality entangled with global capitalism there is, in the case of Soweto, the remembrance of apartheid, the anti-apartheid struggle, and a range of local controversies over this difficult heritage and different ways to deal with it in memorialization projects. I would even say that although coloniality has not exactly vanished from these situations, it is by far not the most prominent and definitely no longer the most visible account of and at the tourist sights. So why give it yet another stage and forum? The scene of cultural heritage tourism and herein the encounter with others' memories sets the stage for a more diverse reading of the entanglement of different memory agencies – memory both in the sense of visitable mediations of the past (a proper tourist sight) and in the sense of 'souvenirs' as memorable encounters with the sites leading to new mediations.

The problem and failure of my initial project was clearly its focus on the 'bad past', a limitation, as Kodwo Eshun (288) rightly underlines, characterized by a lack of space to locate and proactively include brighter or simply more diverse future imaginations, and, I add, the complexity of present situations. I had to undergo a shift from a focus on 'premediation' – the influences of the White European tourist – to 'remediation'. It meant to turn away from the schemata and (popular) representations available to predefined groups that inform their members' take on the world, towards the creative reactions and remediations of individuals in actual encounters with different sites of memory and the associations these appropriations make.

This thesis then evolved into an exercise to take all the 'stuff' gathering around memorial sites or circulating and waiting to be accessed via an encounter with these sites on- and offline, and see which questions it poses. This recalls Bruno Latour's demand to question our practice as academics who seem to

go on ceaselessly transforming the whole rest of the world into naïve believers, into fetishists, into hapless victims of domination, while at the same time turning them into the mere superficial consequences of powerful hidden causalities coming from infrastructures whose makeup is never interrogated ("Critique" 243).

As an alternative to critique and, I would argue, at the same time an innovative form of it, Latour himself offers the notion of composition.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See his "Attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto'". Latour has been widely criticized for dismissing critique as out-dated. See for example Benjamin Noys's "The Discreet Charm of Bruno Latour" where

My rather limited approach to postcolonial tourist practices ran the risk of reducing counter-accounts or interventions into a White colonial memory to simply being ‘alternatives’, a problem I faced when preparing a first paper presentation for a conference in Helsinki. Opening up to memory (and history) in-the-making means to grant each actor presently active the same agency and impact beyond the formula ‘dominant A acts and subordinate B re-acts’. In a second step it can indeed be interesting to detect certain patterns in certain accounts or actions, like, for example, the continuity of a colonial imaginary. But first it was important to refrain from reading other-than-white-Western accounts as mere *re*-actions, alternative or resistant acts to dominant voices; the writing-back that postcolonial studies propagated in the nineties. The same holds true for the notion of counter-memory as Kodwo Eshun (288) notes. Critical heritage scholar Sven Ouzman (272-273) furthermore points to the fact that concepts like counter-memory or ‘reversed gaze’ have the ‘benefit of presenting a counternarrative, but the disadvantage of being easily ignored because it typically is reactive’.

Cultural forms, even if they address dominant acts, also act beyond resistance. Just calling them ‘resistant’ or ‘counter’ immensely limits their role as mediators constituting networks and worlds.<sup>32</sup> It is exactly this problematic of structure vs. agency that Latour in the spirit of ethnomethodology sought to avoid. I believe that ANT’s more philosophical gain for studies mapping relations and inquiring into how culture is re-assembling, is initially the assumption that every relation is preceded and afforded by another relation; that every actor is always an actor-network, brought forth by other tools, actions and forces. For the context of the South African material and cases discussed in this thesis, the implicit assumption would be that a) the imagination and cultural expression of South African histories and memories is and has always been tied to the re-imagination of other, for example European, histories

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he describes how Latour’s ‘anti-critique’ and its ways of (not) dealing with capitalism ‘effectively casts itself as a “grand narrative” in its very modesty’ (19-20): ‘The dissolution of capital into networks and objects reproduces the image of successful capitalism as a series of autonomous sub-systems. (...) In this precise sense we can say that Latour, and this form of critique, belongs to the age of neo-liberalism. (...) the form belongs to the “grammar of neo-liberalism” as a particular political form’.

<sup>32</sup> It is important to note, of course, as Mirzoeff for example does in *The Right to Look* (2011), that there *is* hegemony in visual culture. He situates this hegemony already in his definition of visuality as ‘visualization of history’ (474) bound to a certain authority, which is why he consequentially needs to introduce the term *counter*-visuality as well. Though Mirzoeff’s take also points towards the entanglement of memory and visuality and the many forces that assemble and reassemble memory, I argue, other than Mirzoeff, that visuality itself already includes possible counter-acts.

and memories – and vice versa! (this has been illustrated beautifully in Edouard Glissant’s *The Poetics of Relation*); and that b) dominating European racializing and exoticizing fantasies in travelogues or in other symbolic representations as reactions to other’s commemoration, always exist in relation and subject to other’s expressions.

The work that culture and cultural memory do is therefore to be taken out of a resistant or alternative space, meeting it as an actor-network among other actor-networks. To get back to the quote in the beginning of this section: If, for the critic, *the fact that something is constructed means it is fragile*, the colonial mindset which is still being constructed in the present is fragile, too. If it is fragile, it is obviously already contested and transgressed by other mindsets, techniques and tools. We have to engage these mindsets in the arenas where they gather next to each other and according to the associations they (are enabled to) make or don’t make. Sammy Baloji’s photographic collage following this interlude illustrates the both ‘old’ and ‘new’ approaches of this thesis, offering just such an arena. MÉMOIRE reveals the continuing, albeit mostly invisible, impact of the colonial past in the present landscape and it juxtaposes what can be found of this past with what can be made of it in the present: a new collage as creative appropriation of the material and mediated memories available in the present.

THINK BOX I

Making the past visible as continuous but changeable condition in the present

Can we speak of a general visual absence of colonized landscapes?

Investigate the shifting visibility of difficult pasts



Fig. 3. Sammy Baloji: *Mémoire*. Untitled 25. 60x134.5 cm. 2006.

>> Offering participants arenas in which to gather << (Latour)

How can we visualize different overlapping histories and memories and their reworking in the present?

Engaging with difficult remains

Point out the different temporalities of memory objects



PRACTICE

## Methodology

Focusing on webs of relationships instead of simply things-in-themselves, the bricoleur<sup>33</sup> constructs the object of study in a more complex framework. In this process, attention is directed toward processes, relationships, and interconnections among phenomena. (Kincheloe 323)

In network, it's the *work* that is becoming foregrounded. (Latour, "Networks, Societies, Spheres" 8)

Memory needs to be worked at, invested in and practiced in order to live (on). It is alive as long as it is being used, mediated and modified:<sup>34</sup> it exists in and as effect of *collective activity*, and, in particular, *collective appropriation*. The central question guiding my research has been: What can we learn about the work of cultural memory when following the mundane, ordinary accounts and reactions that stem from encounters with sites of memory? Even if these reactions and additions appear somewhat profane at times, Memory Studies should look more into *how* memorialization projects as 'unfinished'<sup>35</sup> and generally open cultural communications – memorials built to sustain sensation and an interest in the past as well as an interest in the role of the past for the present and the future – are received and worked with, how they are appropriated by ordinary people in, for instance, ordinary snapshots. These acts of collective appropriation constantly alter memory's media. In fact, they are the actual *mediators* of cultural memory. This is the question of how cultural memory *works*.

My interest in ordinary snapshots rose with the idea that our personal memory objects stemming from encounters with public sites of memory, and how we inscribe ourselves in these different locations and for different uses (a note on a wall or in a guest book), provide a rich repertoire of objects potentially invested with further acts of remembering. These new memories exist and evolve next to institutionalized memory sites, such as monuments, museums, or public works of art, while also adding to and transforming these sites. Tourists' visual appropriations do not only give

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<sup>33</sup> Mark Deuze also draws from Lévy Strauss' notion of bricolage to highlight that 'things remain under construction' in digital culture: '[B]ricolage as an emerging practice can be considered to be a principal component of digital culture, as well as an accelerating agent of it' (70-71).

<sup>34</sup> This has also been underlined, albeit in different terms and with different aims, by Jeffrey Olick: 'Mnemonic practices (...) are always simultaneously individual and social. And no matter how concrete mnemonic products may be, *they gain their reality only by being used, interpreted, and reproduced or changed*' (158, my emphasis).

<sup>35</sup> I borrow this term from Ariella Azoulay who calls 'The Family of Man' an 'unfinished text' (37).



us feedback to how institutionalized sites for commemoration ‘work’ and are being received, they also give us access to the ‘cultural’ in memory, the participative memory work both humans and objects, sites and images, continuously exercise and compose together.

How to work with and where to encounter the visitors’ visual appropriations, then? This is the question of operationalizing cultural memory and finding a methodology to investigate memory work transvisually. The methods turned to in this thesis meet appropriation as practice (*Praktik*) as simultaneously entity and performance, forms of bodily (and mental) activities as well as things and their use (Reckwitz 249).<sup>36</sup> This is why a mix of methods is applied, ranging from mobile ethnographic observations of, for instance, tourist picturing practices in specific locations, and the mapping of actors and relations, to close reading of individual snapshots, conversations with their authors, and the juxtaposition of different images and details of them – what Penny Tinkler subsumes under the notion of ‘playing’ with photographs (17).

### **Focusing on ordinary appropriations**

The work of cultural memory is characterized as the entanglement and the mediation of human and nonhuman actions and forms and it is famously involved in the tourist practice. Personal appropriations of traces of the past and of others’ memories make up a huge part of the work involved in making and maintaining memory.<sup>37</sup> I define appropriation as the active reception and individual use of a cultural artefact or site and am borrowing or re-translating the word from discussions in German media studies around the concept of *Aneignung*.<sup>38</sup> Social philosopher Rahel Jaeggi explains the term in a most comprehensive way, writing:

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<sup>36</sup> Practice theorists have turned to a range of questions of importance for this thesis. Schatzki (3) for instance underlines that ‘understanding specific practices always involves apprehending material configurations’.

<sup>37</sup> van Dijk emphasizes the importance of personal memory in cultural remembrance in many of her texts, see for example “Mediated Memories: Personal Cultural Memory as Object of Cultural Analysis”; Arjun Appadurai in a similar vein writes ‘we should begin to see all documentation [and he is mentioning personal documents and family archives] as intervention, and all archiving as part of some sort of collective project’ (Appadurai, “Archive and Aspiration” 16).

<sup>38</sup> See for example Udo Göttlich, “Zur Kreativität des Handelns in der Medienaneignung” (On the creativity of action in media appropriation) and Thomas Elsaesser “Die Ethik der Aneignung” (The ethics of appropriation). I was not aware of the centrality of this term to Karl Marx’ communist manifesto in which, as Jaeggi outlines, *Aneignung* is a necessary revolutionary act.

Appropriation is a practice, a form of a practical relation with the world. Appropriation as such describes a relation of interfusion, of assimilation and internalization in which the appropriated is *at the same time created, shaped and reformed*.<sup>39</sup>

Jaeggi highlights the term's inherent contrast 'between what is given and what is formable, between transfer and creation' which corresponds to the Latourian differentiation between intermediary and mediator.

Ordinary appropriations, ways of making the world, the forms and ways in which memorial sites are recorded, remembered further, and involved in techniques of culture, are the participants that enable and maintain the existence of a memorial site and the cultural memory tied to it. I am aware that 'appropriation', specifically preceded by the term 'cultural' is widely understood as the colonizer's venture to make the Other's goods, styles, and culture one's own, to 'swallow' it without granting its original creator and owner the right to create and possess, and, importantly, to draw a rich cultural history and remember it. In this context I do acknowledge the factually existing power of the hypermobile Western tourist to simply cross any border and 'consume' others' memories. But, as Tucker et al. note, the unidirectionality that is often associated with the term appropriation in the tourist practice is a limited reading. It is not only the tourist appropriating objects and spaces (in a negative way); likewise, these spaces and objects appropriate the tourist – and this is where actor-network methodology obviously comes in. To recognize the mutual act of appropriation I as researcher for instance have to try to put myself in the place of the scribbled walls at Regina Mundi Church or the photograph-statue at Hector Pieterse Museum and the bunker at Blaavand beach – or even the snapshot photograph itself.

The double meaning of the concept of appropriation is indeed useful here: appropriation does not only refer to a colonial endeavour to *possess* the Other (including her past and memories in this case) or to simply take from her rich culture without acknowledging it as such.<sup>40</sup> Importantly, it refers to the mundane *creative*

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<sup>39</sup> 'Aneignung ist eine Praxis, eine Form des praktischen Weltverhältnisses. Aneignung meint dabei ein Verhältnis der Durchdringung, der Assimilation, der Verinnerlichung, in dem das Angeeignete gleichzeitig geprägt, gestaltet und formiert wird'.

<sup>40</sup> The term appropriation has also been used by other scholars of memory to indicate different, more 'negative' notions than the one presented here. Marianne Hirsch, for instance, ("Projected Memory" 9, 16f) refers to appropriation in connection to viewing photographs of children deported during the Holocaust and describes it as an act of idiopathic identification with the other and her memories, dangerously and maybe even violently 'annihilating the distance between self and other'. Another

venture of making sense of other's memories in cultural terms, of working on, processing, the encounter with other's mediated memories. It means, as Tim Ingold puts it, 'to read creativity "forwards", as an improvisatory joining in with formative processes, rather than "backwards", as an abduction from a finished object to an intention in the mind of an agent' ("Bringing Things to Life" 3). Appropriation refers to the creation of one's own account of this encounter and thereby mutually making use of the past with the encountered material, a past which can also to some extent turn out to be shared translocally and transvisually. Appropriation deals with the creative acts of the many in memory work. Even if, as Stuart Hall rightly highlights in "Whose Heritage?", collections of cultural heritage 'have adorned the position of people of power and influence' and even if they have also been subvert to 'the symbolic power to order knowledge, to rank, to classify and arrange' (4), that latter power in my methodology becomes a distributed power, a shared power of unforeseeable net-work and maintenance, appropriating the more institutionalized forms of cultural memory as a diverse reading of the many.

In the following paragraph I will outline my various tools for working with snapshots that shift our focus back and forth between the people using and the sites displaying memory objects as well as the objects and media of memory themselves.

### **Working with vernacular photographs and ANT**

Why still, why again, focus on photography in cultural memory studies? Simply because it still matters. It famously points out the intertwinement of technology, human and nonhuman actors. And its practice produces sharable, often traceable materials that are open to change and movement. Nowadays people will more likely 'dispose' a snapshot they took than share a written or even audio-visual statement depicting and fixing them as authors of a certain experience. I am not readily arguing that the snapshot is less personal but it is indeed easier to publish and get a life of its own, while in turn it offers to the researcher to inquire about its 'biography' (Lury;

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meaning of the term is of course also muscling in the back, namely appropriation in art, which is mainly connected to conscious and intentional referencing of one artwork in another artist's practice and work, as Döhl and Wöhrer argue (8). This meaning resonates here for example in the travelling visual form of the graffiti and the mural, adapted in different South African artistic and everyday contexts, for instance by Kemang Wa Lehulere (See think box II).

Ouzman) and ‘archaeology of use’ (Edwards), what Ariella Azoulay has subsumed under the term the ‘event of photography’ (see, especially, Chapter 5).

One is tempted to think that for the sheer mass of images that are taken and uploaded as well as deleted and forgotten daily, the photograph does not so much matter for longer than the seconds it takes to be uploaded, tagged, watched while it is liked and then forgotten again. It is almost impossible to define its actual impact on and importance to the individuals leading their lives in terms of durability. But the presence of this technology can also hardly be ignored, especially when we observe people who enter a new place for the first time in their life or for a special occasion, both of which is true for the tourist practice. I have observed hundreds of people arriving at a certain site with their tablets literally covering their faces. When getting off buses and cars, they take the first photo of the plaque showing them at which sight they are, then, walking around with their smartphones in the one hand, and their cameras in the other hand, they point at everything the guide points out to them with their cameras, shooting most of what enters the viewfinder. This can leave one slightly puzzled: If the tourist practice’s uniqueness is said to exist in experiencing some place or sight bodily, being there in flesh, and thereby going beyond merely looking at screens providing images of some place or sight, we might wonder which impact the individual’s and her technical props’ actual presence have and whether the sights are not (only) experienced via their images, the recordings made of them. Clearly, there are also other, more unpredictable, practices and strategies. And, as will be shown, some of the snapshots stemming from the seemingly predictable shooting moves also surprise us with regard to how they turn out in the end.

The entanglement of tourist and camera device also recalls Kaja Silverman’s (130-131) conceptualization of the field of vision. Drawing from Jonathan Crary’s and Vilém Flusser’s notions about the place of the camera in the event of photography, she asks whether it is the photographer who uses the camera or, rather, the camera which uses the photographer, and, accordingly, whether images search for their author or whether it is the photographer who ‘finds’ images, and elevates something to an image:

The camera is often less an instrument to be used than one which uses the human subject; as Crary suggests, the camera is more of a machine than a tool. And Vilém Flusser, another recent theorist

of the camera, proposes that the photographer is at best a “functionary” of that apparatus.<sup>41</sup>

Approaching this question with an actor-network methodology, it suffices to say that the ‘event of photography’, to deploy Azoulay’s concept, is a mutual enactment of apparatus, photographer, and photographed scene (and all the actors present and performing in that scene, from buildings, things and other people down to the weather conditions, and the light of course). The photograph is manifested associations made between these actors. Furthermore it culminates as inscription, it leaves a view of this net-work next to many – uncountable – more that together trans-visualize cultural memory in an ‘infinite series of encounters’ with the photograph (Azoulay, “Photography” 77).

The tourist and visitor practice creates an ever-growing array of visualizations in the form of externalized memories. The interesting question, then, is: what happens to all those images? How does a snapshot *socialize*? How can we map and make sense of the associations it makes across the visual? The various chapters of this thesis investigate the formation of networks of cultural memory via the associations of the tourist snapshot. The methods turned to are therefore necessarily multi-sited, interrogating a range of different sites and situations. I follow the snapshot as an actor back and forth between the practices and sites with which it is related or associated; ranging from sites as locations of its production – the memorial site visited (Soweto) or the physical trace encountered (Blaavand) – to sites of its development<sup>42</sup> and distribution, namely internet platforms and services, or the camera and computer screen. Furthermore, I understand the snapshot itself as site and sight of memory with regard to what its visual ‘content’ displays, which associations this content makes, and the different views the snapshot gathers over time.

Next to the classic field of observation in ethnographic analysis, which is the physical, experiential, localizable site and the observable or accounted movements and practices making and performing a coherent scene,<sup>43</sup> I turn to the Internet as another ‘field’. Making a virtue out of necessity I had to find ways to trace the

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<sup>41</sup> See also Flusser (*Towards a Philosophy of Photography* 28ff) on apparatuses, in particular cameras, as black boxes, ‘the starting point for any consideration of the act of photography’ (32).

<sup>42</sup> All of the images turned to in this thesis have, according to their authors, not been edited prior to their distribution (being uploaded to the Internet, printed, or merely shown to the researcher).

<sup>43</sup> Adèle Clarke’s *Situational Analysis* guided me during early stages of my research and especially during fieldwork.

participants in my research and fieldwork, whose ‘original’ accounts I had lost, online and to ‘meet’ new participants in their realm and through the tracing of the inscriptions they left of their encounters with the sites of memory where we met.<sup>44</sup> For the case of Regina Mundi Church, my main sources have been the image search tools of Google and Startup as well as those of photo-sharing platforms Flickr, Picasa and Instagram. Next to finding snapshots I could also get in touch with the people who took and uploaded their photographs about their memory of the experience at the church via FlickrMail and ordinary email.

I have furthermore used Google’s Reversed Image Search’s ‘resemblance display’ as another explorative tool to trace the visual work of particular snapshots and the memorial sites they visualize, such as the photography exhibition at Regina Mundi Church. Google Image’s nonhuman automated pattern recognition investigates the cross-visual resemblance of cultural memory’s visualizations via the snapshots. Regardless of algorithms that my IP-address or server cookies set in motion, leading to different search results (though I made sure to search via three different computers and routers), it is an interesting tool for searching the Internet for visual traces of pictures and typologies of visual forms: it delivers the state-of-view according to the most widely accessed ‘companion’ turned to when we look for something: the search engine. Its ‘visual resemblance thinking’ breaks the look of things down to a few parameters which can serve as both a prescinding and an inspirational tool.

What do the snapshots show and tell us? What kind of documentation of and starting point into the memory acts and mundane appropriations of sights of memory are they? Firstly, they tell us what has been interesting to and attracted the attention and recording of an individual visitor during her visit to the sight. Secondly, they save the appearance of a tourist sight at different points in time and thereby make it observable over time, letting us trace visual inscriptions and other visible transformations. This admittedly mainly applies to sights which have the capacity to be transformed by human and nonhuman intervention (and I will return to this aspect many times). Thirdly, there are a range of surprises that the snapshots continuously offer to us, not only with regard to what they display – most of them are at least to some degree unaware of some of the things they picture – but also about the situation

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<sup>44</sup> It finds resonance in what Sarah Pink (126) terms visual (Internet) ethnography; see also Picken (253): ‘The virtual world creates new kinds of access and with it, new material relations with photographs’.

in which they were taken and how they are re-used and appropriated in yet other situations.

### **Structure of thesis and reading guide**

In the following paragraphs I will give short synopses of the individual chapters and point out the connections between them. This also outlines the different steps of the shift of this thesis from a framework informed by postcolonial thinking to one reassembled via an actor-network methodology. I will illustrate in four steps how the main argument of this thesis evolved through the various cases and in particular the engagement with the materials for different purposes:

1. The almost accidental engagement with my family's holiday snapshots, featuring ruins of the Atlantikwall at Blaavand beach (Chapter 4), led me to rethinking the role of the ordinary snapshot in cultural memory studies as well as the presence and visibility of "difficult" remains of the past. It was here that I started to think of snapshots as *appropriations* of sites of memory.

2. During my fieldwork visit to the Regina Mundi Church in Soweto, South Africa, I became aware of the palimpsest character of memory work (Chapters 2 and 3) that asks for a methodology which recognizes human and nonhuman activity likewise, while still allowing for image work. The exhibition 'The Story of Soweto' displayed an active and ongoing interplay of different objects and people, accounts, and inscriptions. It also made me think further about how visitors' appropriations of a memorial site, such as the inscriptions they leave on the walls and their mediations in the form of snapshots, make memory work dynamic: both unconscious as in the case of WW2 bunkers and intended as in the case of the pictures taken at the Regina Mundi Church.

3. I noticed how seemingly preliminary and fragile sites ('The Story of Soweto's' exhibition walls) or unwanted and largely overlooked remains from the past (the indestructible bunkers) enhance participatory interaction with the past and (others') memories more strongly than pompous monumental memorials.

4. Thinking about a typology of the tourist snapshot in different contexts of memorialization resulted in the recognition of *oversights*, the intertwinement of visibility and absences in memory work and tourist picturing practices. Voids and

emptiness at a memorial site as well as pictured absence in photographs sustain interest for memory in remarkable ways.

One might rightfully ask, how can such overtly different sites, a bunker-beach in Denmark and an exhibition in a church in South Africa be related? There are several answers to this question. One is of course the researcher's engagement with, and involvement in, both settings during the time of the research project.

Theoretically it is also possible that the souvenirs from trips to these sites, the snapshots taken etc. 'rest' and meet in the same shoebox or drawer or are stored in the same folder on the computer under the path 'Photos' → 'Holiday'. But they don't necessarily have to be connected. Although they negotiate very different forms and sites of memory and aspects of the past, we can approach both sites in their mutual entanglement with the tourist practice and the event of photography. Furthermore, in a world where actors relate to each other across very diverse sites and leave traces that are no longer localisable in one specific territory, a study no longer needs to, or even can, be focused on one 'place' or 'region' only. For a variety of reasons people and objects travel both self-determined and under constraint and meet in different places and sites.

Just as the methodology leading most of the cases in this thesis is focused on the *processes*, the many small actors and actions composing the work of cultural memory and making cultural memory *work*, the thesis itself is unfolded as a traceable process for its reader. The different acts, events, things, and decisions in the course of the research that made it move and change are presented here including at times seemingly mismatching sites or backgrounds of the material turned to.

Next to this introduction, the thesis consists of three published essays (Chapters 3, 4 and 6) as individual chapters as well as two additional chapters that frame the discussions of the published essays. Chapters 2 and 5 were written after the parallel development of the other three chapters and grant more space to further methodological work and theoretical conclusions. I included these two, as the space for theoretical argument in case study-based published essays is rather limited due to, among other things, word count restrictions. I nevertheless come up with unique examples wherever possible to enable every chapter, in principle, to stand on its own. This outline still inevitably involves repetition to some degree such as the multiple mentions of central quotes.



Next to the chapters, there are four *think boxes* featuring notes about selected artworks that accompanied and inspired the writing of the thesis. The encounter with these works led to some of the most crucial decisions I took while reorganizing the thesis from a classic postcolonial critique of a European cultural memory that impacts on exoticizing visualizations of the Other to a more affirmative mapping of relational acts of remembering at different sites. The works are all in one way or the other occupied with the question of how we remember and how we can visualize cultural memory and the unseen or overlooked herein. I have been thinking back and forth whether or not I should include these but in the end they are proper ‘fieldwork memos’, and not least therefore actual, quotable influences and sources for academic work that should be granted their space and reference in the final written piece as well. The works appear as short intermediates such as Sammy Baloji’s *MÉMOIRE* above, posing questions and pointing to concepts. Below, I will give short summaries including background information of both the chapters and the boxes.

*Think Box I: Sammy Baloji’s Mémoire (2006)*

I came across Baloji’s photographic collages at KIASMA Museum in Helsinki after my first paper presentation of the PhD project at the conference *Imagining Spaces/Places* (24-26 August 2011) and it gave a first answer to how I can possibly grasp overlapping stories in postcolonial memoryscapes. In the paper I was making the point that next to the dominant stereotypical images of Africa that lay bare the continuous coloniality in visual representations and individual mindsets of European tourists, new and alternative imaginaries will emerge. Baloji’s series raises questions about the visual entanglement of coloniality and global capitalism with the (after)life of landscapes and everyday work life in the present. The photo collages juxtapose a range of issues central to this thesis such as archival and contemporary, found and personal photographs as well as ruins then and now. With *MÉMOIRE* we can understand cultural memory as a (bri)colage where memory takes form in the present. It thereby offered a *PRACTICE* to the research situation and ways to imagine the past as composition.

## *Chapter 2: Memory Studies and Actor-Network Theory. Tracing the Visual Work of Cultural Memory*

In this chapter I develop a new conceptual and methodological approach to studying cultural memory that is mainly deduced from observations and conclusions during the writing of the case studies. I argue herein for an understanding of cultural memory as *effect of collective appropriation*, whereby cultural memory is not only understood as effect of collective activity by humans and things but also focused and dependent on appropriation, the new materials that an encounter with memorial sites produces.

In this chapter I do three things: (i) make use of and operationalize *sensitizing concepts* of actor-network theory (ANT) in a theoretical framework that can grasp the dynamic visual work of cultural memory at the Regina Mundi Church exhibition, ‘The Story of Soweto’; (ii) derive *methodological tools* from these concepts to access the manifold acts that make up the event of the visual in cultural memory by tracing visitor snapshots; and (iii) draw on these examples to promote certain *patterning*s of sites of memory that notably afford engagement and visitors’ appropriations.

The two methodological exercises evolve Latour’s notion of mediation and trace appropriation as a cultural form of memory work. Disentangling the snapshots via ANT-inspired image work emphasizes that collective appropriation is apparent on at least three levels: the experiential level of the encounter with the site and the mediated past, the further mediation of the encountered displays, and the ‘content’ of these mediations that makes further associations. I also return to the concept of the transvisual to describe how different sites and sights and the recordings and mediations of them as well as the visual practices, techniques and technologies that enabled them trans-act, meet, and rearrange themselves in new ways and works. The wall of remembrance at the exhibition ‘The Story of Soweto’ at Regina Mundi Church serves as an example which illustrates the visual work of cultural memory as a composition by everyone who joins in.

## *Chapter 3: The Agency of Memory Objects: Tracing Memories of Soweto at Regina Mundi Church*

The preparation of this chapter was crucial for an overall shift of the thesis from a reading of tourists’ mnemonic practices rooting in a colonial imaginary to an actor-network approach to the dynamics of cultural memory. I investigated the ‘life’ and

agency of the tourist snapshot taken at sites of memory in more detail while simultaneously reading Bruno Latour's *Reassembling the Social*. Latour's terminology offered me the toolbox I needed to think with the snapshots and to describe step-by-step how action unfolds, how memory acts are relational and how they are entwined with the visual. The work on this chapter made me circle in on the famous Regina Mundi Church in Soweto, home to the barely noted photographic exhibition 'The Story of Soweto' as the main site turned to in this thesis.

Chapter 3 analyses the multifarious acts of cultural memory taking place in the small, almost hidden exhibition space, where visitors can for instance leave their names and comments on the exhibition walls. These inscriptions constitute a preferred motif for domestic and international tourists' snapshots, projecting the scribbled walls beyond the exhibition space. Via a close reading of visitor snapshots, I show how the walls act as an alternative public forum for people to articulate their thoughts, 'prove' that they were there, answer other comments, or even 'correct' opinions in the exhibition. They are a strange mixture of a public guestbook, a mind map, and a hall of remembrance: a 'remind-map'. The essay introduces a methodology inspired by actor-network theory to the field of memory studies, showing, among other things, how the snapshots as participatory interactions with the exhibition can act as mediators of memory.

Published in an anthology of Memory Studies (*Memory Unbound: New Directions in Memory Studies* edited by Lucy Bond, Pieter Vermeulen, and Stef Craps), earlier versions of this chapter were presented at the Lisbon Summer School for the Study of Culture in June 2013 and the Mnemonics Summer School in Gent in September 2013.

*Think Box II: Kemang Wa Lehulere's Some Deleted Scenes Too (2012)*

Right after the Regina Mundi case I turn to Kemang Wa Lehulere's work with murals, such as in *SOME DELETED SCENES TOO*, an installation mixing drawings, writings and a performance. As part of this exhibition project Wa Lehulere draws and writes with white chalk on a wall painted in black. Some of it has been wiped over and is barely decipherable. The texts are a mixture of stage directions and stories about, for instance, memories. The whole thing made me think of the wall of remembrance at Regina Mundi Church and the durability of graffiti or other

inscriptions on walls. Kemang Wa Lehulere confirms this observation in an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist saying that:

My interest was coming from the kind of writings on walls that was there during apartheid. What kind of writings go on the walls in a space where there is political conflict or a certain type of oppression, but also what kind of texts then appear in a space where there is liberation or freedom?

Wa Lehulere then mentions as an example ‘We Won’t Move’, which is also the photographed slogan in Jürgen Schadeberg’s photograph that attracts so many visitors at the exhibition ‘The Story of Soweto’.

As the title suggests, some of the scenes are deleted. We don’t know whether we see the deleted scenes or whether the ensemble that we see lacks the other scenes that have already been deleted. *SOME DELETED SCENES TOO* therefore builds the bridge between the actor-network of the inscribed walls of remembrance at Regina Mundi Church where comments can be deleted, actively added, ignored or corrected, and the remaining three chapters, which all look into the dynamic of visual absence in cultural memory work by turning to the concept of *oversight*.

#### *Chapter 4: Concrete Memories: The In/Visibility of Bunker Ruins*

The idea for Chapter 4 (published in *Transvisuality. The Cultural Dimension of Visuality Vol 2: Visual Organizations*) came up when I, after the second round of interviewing Danish tourists about their picturing practices and memory work during and after their Africa trips, found myself stuck with my doctoral project and decided to do something with my family’s holiday snapshots from 30 years of holidaying in Blaavand for a conference in the Danish Network for Cultural Memory Studies.

The essay traces the presence of Second World War bunkers in amateur holiday snapshots and discusses the ambiguous role of the bunker site in visual cultural memory. It shows how Adolf Hitler’s *Atlantikwall* project which paved the holiday beaches of Western Europe between France and Norway confronts leisure travel and heritage in a challenging way for our understanding of the manifold relations between visibility and memory work. Departing from my family’s private photo collection from twenty years of vacationing at the Danish West coast, the various mundane and poetic appropriations and inscriptions of the bunker site are depicted. Ranging between overlooked side presences and an overwhelming visibility, the concrete remains of fascist war architecture are involved in and motivate different

sensuous experiences and mnemonic appropriations by tourists. The memory work done in this essay meets the bunkers' changing visibility and the cultural topography they both actively transform and are being transformed by, juxtaposing different acts and objects of memory over time and in different visual articulations.

The first version of this chapter was presented as the paper 'Playing in places – Holiday memories and the making of place' at the The Practice of Memory: Time, Place, Performance conference at Aarhus University (8-9 December 2011). The chapter was then reorganized for the *Transvisuality* anthology. Doing something with these personal photographs and thinking further about their place and agency in memory work gave way to the development of my overall methodology and let me focus almost solely on the tourist snapshot which is why this case also became one of the thesis' chapters despite its rather different local setting (Denmark instead of Southern Africa). It is here where I first discuss the bunker ruin in the photograph as *Übersehenswürdigkeit* (a term I borrowed from Harald Kimpel), an *overseværighed* in Danish, a sight-worth-overlooking, which brought up the term *oversight* that would stay with me until the end of this project's research, and, due to its ambiguous meanings, proved to be a continuous inspiration.

### *Think Box III: Ivan Vladislavić's Double Negative (2011)*

Before I theorize the notion of oversight further in Chapter 5, I turn to Ivan Vladislavić's *DOUBLE NEGATIVE*, a novel I was reading on the flight back from South Africa. It led to the first clue on how to rethink the event of the visual in memory work and in particular the role of unrealized snapshots herein. It put a new QUESTION to my research: How are overlooked sites and overseen absence pictured in snapshots? With *Double Negative*, one of my favourite authors had written a book about a photograph which is not once shown but only talked about, a photograph that, for the most part of the book, does not even exist but only slowly takes form in the mind of the protagonist, an upcoming photographer. As a matter of fact, Vladislavić's novel was originally launched as a joint publication with David Goldblatt's photographic collection *TJ - The Johannesburg Photographs*. Goldblatt's photographs not only show visual resemblance to the Soweto photographic exhibition discussed in Chapter 3, but some of his photographs (including one from *TJ*) will also be discussed

in Chapter 6, so the thesis itself plays its part in the many ongoing associations established between different circulating media of memory.

*Chapter 5: Oversights – Memory and the Overlooked in Holiday Snapshots*

In an era of constant self-portrayal, with photographs instantly shared on social media to solicit real-time reactions in the form of ‘likes’ (and ‘dislikes’), deleted scenes and overlooked or discarded images as well as images that don’t seem to fit in gain a totally new meaning. This chapter picks up on the notion of oversight evoked in Chapters 4 and 6 and evolves the relationality of the visual, of absence and dynamic cultural memory via a typology of the tourist snapshot and visitors’ picturing practices at sites of memory. Drawing from Ariella Azoulay’s ‘event of photography’ and Joanna Zylińska’s ‘photomediations’ to understand the work of the snapshot today, the chapter discusses the phenomenon of oversight with regard to memory work in two ways: firstly, as a *mnemonic practice* of overlooking details in the event of photography, namely things – in this case actors of memory – which we do not see, that is overlook, either when taking the photograph or when looking at it later on. Secondly, deriving from the first observation, I investigate oversight as *mnemonic quality* of sights and images, which makes us ‘see more when nothing is seen’ at a physical sight to be photographed or in the picture itself. This refers to the productive and creative quality of absence and emptiness for the attraction of an encountered site or image as sustaining the work of cultural remembrance.

The chapter not only turns to tourists’ picturing practices, their manoeuvring in and with the visual, but also reflects the role of the visual in the research practice. Having established the concept of oversight I fathom its resonance in the Latourian concept of blackboxing whereby I return to the methodological thoughts and my critique of Latour voiced in Chapter 2.

*Chapter 6: Encountering Over/sights. Remembering Invisible Pasts Through Photography*

This chapter juxtaposes two fields and techniques of visual memory and memorialization – tourist snapshots and art photography – in their capacity to set memory on the move translocally. Circulating through media and exhibition spaces, both modes of engagement (Jill Bennett) offer an encounter with other’s memories. I

propose that this encounter is enhanced when the image creatively deals with absences in the sense of missing, overseen as overtly visible, or overlooked props in a landscape. Drawing from the notion of *oversight* to capture these dynamics of spatial vision in dealing with media of memory, I illustrate the shifting visibility and invisibility of memory by zooming in on South African memoryscapes via a selection of untypical tourist snapshots and photographs by South African photographers Thabiso Sekgala and David Goldblatt. I argue that a joint reading of these conventionally different media of memory shows their mutually enriching features for the study of memory, visibility, and alterity.

The paper was originally designed for the conference Experiencing Space – Spacing Experience that I unfortunately could not attend. The manuscript was then rewritten for a special issue of the *Journal of Global Studies and Contemporary Art* on ‘Memory and the Other: Translocal and Transdisciplinary Memories’. While trying to figure out patterns in visitors’ photos of their Soweto trips, the focus of the journal on artistic practices encouraged me to also take other-than-tourist photographs into account when thinking about oversights. Here I introduce the notion of ‘intentional absences’ in the artists’ photographs, voids worked into the photographs which are affording memory work. This chapter further developed the notion of oversight introduced in Chapter 4 before I fully explored it when writing Chapter 5. Preliminary notes of this chapter were also discussed as part of Mieke Bal’s Master Class ‘Migratory Aesthetics. Reading Moving Images’ in Copenhagen on 23 October 2013.

*Think Box IV: Meleko Mokgosi’s Walls of Casbah (2014)*

Finally, and as a way to lead over to the conclusion, I turn to Meleko Mokgosi’s WALLS OF CASBAH II. Mokgosi’s scribbled and corrected museum plaques are an ongoing project of the artist (see also his *Modern Art: The Roots of the African Savage*). The reworked plaques put in focus the potential of overwriting and commenting as creative influential acts that question, add to, and resituate (among other things) stubborn colonial myths such as the culturalization and regionalization of ‘African art’. On top of the first sheet in WALLS OF CASBAH (see fig. 43) is written: ‘Eminent here is the refusal to acknowledge that all forms of cultural production have historically embodied some relations to sociopolitical conditions beyond nationstate discourse’. Mokgosi’s interventions and inscriptions in the found

museum plaques are manifold: humble thoughts, overt critique, orthography and grammar, also semantic corrections (he criticizes the use of the term ‘engaged’ in the sentence ‘when the British moved north to *engage* in the Anglo-Boer War’), cross outs, question marks, thoughts, historical corrections, rage etc.

Googling for ‘similar images’ with an image of Mokgosi’s artwork (one I also took from the artist’s website so it was ‘found’ or tracked via Google in the first place) displays images of images on paper, mostly images of all kinds of maps – maps in books, maps on the wall, professional maps, amateur maps, old maps, new maps, city maps, country maps, a sketched mind map, and, suddenly: the photograph of two pages in a guestbook. I don’t take this as contingency, and even if it were, it nevertheless highlights the mapping character of the undertaking of both Mokgosi’s work in question, and, as I will argue throughout all chapters, of cultural memory in general, such as the wall of remembrance at the Regina Mundi Church. Mokgosi offers a STRATEGY: by zooming in on his work I want to build the bridge from the thesis’ interlude in the Introduction to the Conclusion, where I revisit the original research proposal’s objective to analyse ruptures and interventions in an ongoing colonial cultural memory.

If memory needs to be actualized in order to ‘stay alive’, we must not only study how it is being mediated at sites of memory, but, just as importantly, how these mediated memories are appropriated by very ordinary people. If appropriation is a collective composition by things and people, we must not lose sight of the materiality of memory and the life of things. The tourist snapshot at sites of memory gives an excellent point of entry into this study. By way of tracing tourist snapshots, the following chapters gather conceptual work, methodological tools and visual analyses in situ that meet and map the dynamic work of cultural memory.



July 2012, Soweto, South Africa

Imagine a sunny Sunday morning in wintry Soweto. Blue sky, cold wind, dry air, rich with the smell of food prepared for after-church gatherings. Led by Denny, one of the church's tourist guides, we enter the Regina Mundi Church through the back door. Once the door is shut, the unique acoustic of a church surrounds us: the choir humming, people softly conversing, food bowls being placed on tables. It is quite dark in the rear of the building where stairs lead up to the balcony. We are urged to take them and 'have a look'. I don't think our guide mentioned that a photography exhibition awaited us.

As we enter 'The Story of Soweto', we hear our footsteps on the flagged floor and sense an atmosphere that is at once private and anonymous. The white partitions (the kind found in the corridors of primary schools), displaying mainly black and white photographs, appear stiff. Coming closer we discover that the walls on which the photos are mounted have been tagged with messages, notes and comments in a range of styles, colours and languages, left there over a period of at least ten to fifteen years. The selection of photographs to illustrate the hi/story of Soweto is pretty exquisite, too, though clearly focusing on the oeuvre of the curator's husband, Jürgen Schadeberg. His photographs of Johannesburg are displayed as unique prints, signed and dated especially for the occasion of this permanent exhibition in Regina Mundi Church.

Captivated by the scene but not knowing how best to capture it, I switch from audio recording to video recording, and make a short and confused clip. Where should I zoom? There are so many notes! Which should I read first? Back in the hostel, I search for 'Regina Mundi Church' on Flickr.com and realize that I am not the only one who is attracted by the graffiti-like notes.

I go back to the church, following visitors on tours and also those who come on their own. I observe that first people look and listen. A lot of time passes before they start to take pictures. Something in the exhibition or the church seems to make them slow down, explore, come closer and move back, look up and down, right and left, kneel, swivel their heads to decipher the comments or the captions beside the photographs: They spend an unusual amount of time looking at the walls and each and every photograph, caption and notes scribbled next to them.

Sometimes they photograph each other looking at the exhibit, but rarely take selfies or other 'conscious portraits' where they smile or look straight at the camera. This is quite different from the way tourists often take 'snaps'. Most of the time, however, the exhibition is left to itself, and I sit and watch the way the light shining through the stained-glass windows changes through the day.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Notes compiled from my fieldwork diary.

## 2. Memory Studies and Actor-Network Theory. Tracing the Visual Work of Cultural Memory

### Abstract

Inspired by actor-network theory (ANT), in this chapter I develop a theoretical framework to grasp the dynamic visual work of memory. Cultural memory is introduced as effect of collective appropriations on multiple levels in the event of the visual. Throughout the chapter I apply Latourian notions of ‘mediation’ and ‘mediator’ to describe the ways in which actors, like the tourist’s snapshot at sites of memory, translate and network mediated memories, such as photographs in an exhibition. Further developing three sensitizing concepts of actor-network methodology – namely entanglement, relationality and traceability – I operationalize them in two methodological tools, which I exemplify with observations and visitor snapshots at the photographic exhibition, ‘The Story of Soweto’, in the Regina Mundi Church in Soweto. The chapter closes with descriptions of ‘patterings’ of sites of memory that afford visitors’ engagement and appropriations.

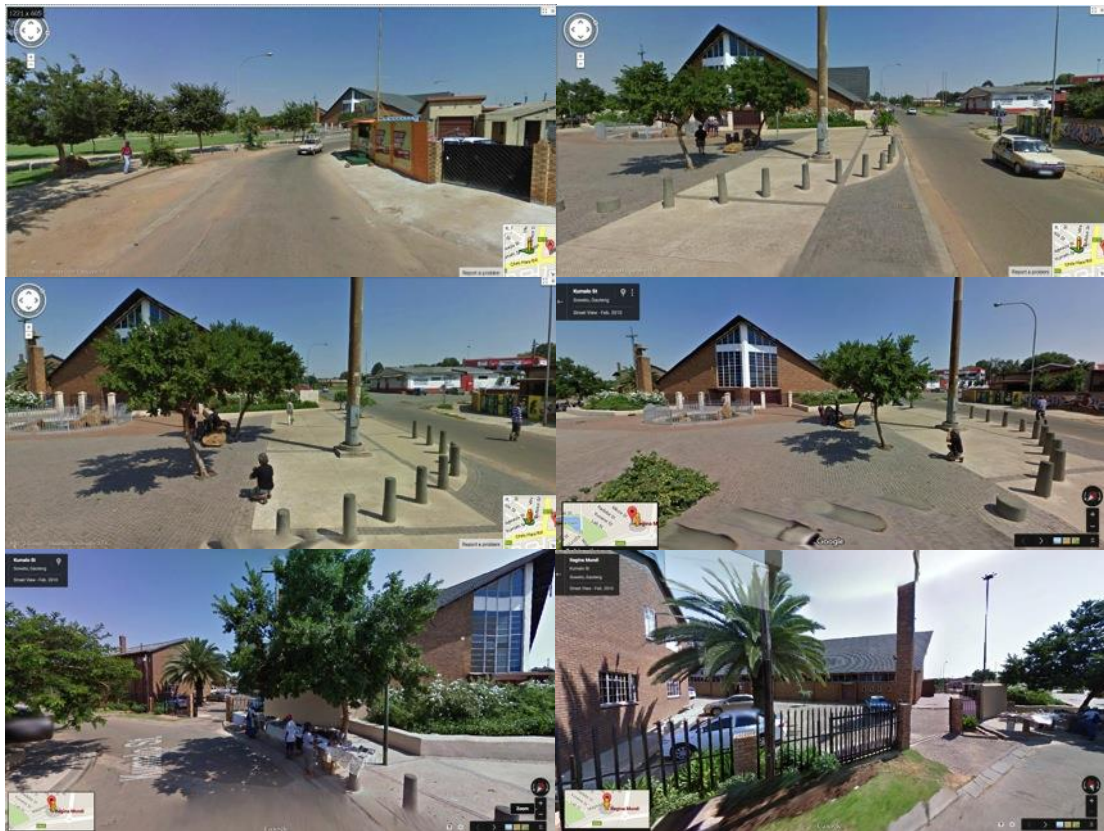


Fig. 4. Screenshots of Google street views around Regina Mundi Church, South Africa. February 2010. Views 1 to 6, from top left to bottom right.

## The event of the visual in cultural memory

Apart from the number of copies sold and the number and length of reviews published, a book in the past left few traces. Once in the hands of their owners, what happened to the characters remained a private affair. If readers swapped impressions and stories about them, no one else knew about it. The situation is entirely different with the digitalisation of the entertainment industry: characters leave behind a range of data. In other words, the scale to draw is not one going from the virtual to the real, but a scale of increasing traceability. (Latour, “Beware”)

Nowadays we can visually approach a site – or any ‘point of interest’ – with Google Street View before we experience it in person. We can explore how it looked in the recent past, at the exact moment when Google (or any other service that shares visual data online) recorded it. In the case of the Regina Mundi Church, the images on Google Maps (fig. 4) directly transport us into the tourist practice with a series of a visitor setting up to take a photograph of the memorial church (views 2-4). In screenshot no. 4, we see Denny, the guide, talking to a woman and pointing at the church, while a man is kneeling to photograph the church building. In view 5, we see vendors displaying their crafts and curios at its rear. With the aim of getting into the mood to write up my observations, I accessed these views of the church after returning from doing fieldwork in Soweto in June/July 2012. The street views catapult us right into the event of the visual in cultural memory.

These screenshots reveal that at every moment that we are visiting a site and perhaps taking pictures of it, others may be filming and photographing us, and our images – the pictures we take, as well as those taken of us/featuring us – start their own journeys. Theoretically, all these recorded movements could be traced, although that would mean spending hours online searching platforms, guessing tag words and hoping the algorithms will do their job. Since not everything is instantly posted online, we would also have to consult other memory and other ‘offline’ devices for storing media. In any case, pictures of us taking snaps or looking at something in a particular location, are out there, just as other people and things appear in *our* trip photos. The quantity of live recordings is uncountable. No longer do just hyper-mobile Western tourists photograph a particular sight, they are also photographed by other tourists (and local dwellers) in the act of taking pictures. The account of the encounter with a site via its visual materials and practices is a *mise-en-abîme*, or rather: a networking visual association.

What does this make of the ‘field’ that I, the researcher, access and co-create? My field, distributed among different sites and sights, can only be grasped by different acts of tracing, of zooming in and out of locations, practices and materials. This includes locations such as the physically experiential site of memory or on- and offline storages for tourist snapshots. It refers to practices such as ‘tourist picturing’ and to materials like the ‘components’ of a site of memory or the tourist snapshots created along with encountering it. Different sites and sights and the recordings of them, as well as the visual practices, techniques and technologies that enabled these mediations and influence their circulation, *trans-act*. I navigate between them with a methodology that I call ‘transvisual’, a methodology that recognizes the various visual materials, technologies, sites, practices and memories that cross and overlap.

Because people increasingly make public digitalized recordings of their encounters with a site of memory, an exhibition, or a photograph exhibited at a site, the work of memory has become increasingly traceable – as Bruno Latour notes in the above quote. The snapshot from the visit to ‘The Story of Soweto’ found in a Flickr photo stream is not only a reference to the site visited, it also becomes part of its memory work, further distributing mediated memories of the site and making them traceable via many more sites and recordings. Paraphrasing Ariella Azoulay’s ‘event of photography’, the resulting *event of the visual* is ‘made up of an infinite series of encounters’ (“Photography” 77), ‘a special form of encounter between participants where none of them possess a sovereign status’ (70). The visual results from the collective effort of people, practices, technologies, places, pictures and objects. Entangled with cultural memory – the public reworking of (exteriorized) memories of the past in still new memories – it depends on *mediation*.

Here ‘mediation’ as used by Latour is understood as the ways that actors translate a certain event, account or story, or how a photograph acts in an exhibition communicating the anti-apartheid struggle. Mediation describes how this event is translated into new materials that in turn become actors on their own, like the comments that visitors leave on the walls of the Soweto exhibition and the snapshots of these comments that are published in an online travel forum. The particular interest of these mediating interventions in cultural memory work is when they change from being just a performance to having competence.<sup>46</sup> This is what I call *appropriation*:

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<sup>46</sup> See for instance Latour, “How Better to Register the Agency of Things”.

the materialized, sharable and creative outcomes of visitors' encounter with a memorial site.

In this chapter I propose a notion of cultural memory to describe the dynamics of the continuous creation of associations in the formation of publicly mediated memories. The 'cultural' in memory refers to the many actors involved in mediations: it is the outcome of participating and sharing, of collective composing. I argue that cultural memory should be understood as the *effect of collective appropriation*, not only of different people but also of the materials they encounter and produce as new memories from such encounters. This scene and situation depends as much on materiality, on 'stuff' in the form of realized memory, as on collective activity by human-nonhuman relations. In this chapter I do three things: (i) make use of and operationalize *sensitizing concepts* of actor-network theory (ANT) in a theoretical framework that can grasp the dynamic visual work of cultural memory at the Regina Mundi Church exhibition, 'The Story of Soweto'; (ii) derive *methodological tools* from these concepts to access the manifold acts that make up the event of the visual in cultural memory by tracing visitor snapshots; and (iii) draw on these examples to promote certain *patterning*s of sites of memory that notably afford engagement and visitors' mediating appropriations.

### **'Culture' in actor-network terms: Appropriation**

The central question is: How can we grasp the work of cultural memory that is accumulating at this church while also recognizing all the accounts and actors that compose and transcend it, situating this site of memory in many more places and repositories of memory (beyond the site featured in the Google Street Views)? What issues of cultural memory does this exhibition space raise with regard to the visual? Different 'inhabitations' (Jill Bennett) meet and are enacted at the Regina Mundi Church and its photographic exhibition, particularly the wall of remembrance: a former location of struggle and violence, today a site of ordinary church life and touristic encounter, and a stage for future acts of cultural remembrance to entangle. My approach focuses on tourist snapshots of the exhibition space of 'The Story of Soweto' that are sharable and traceable accounts of it. These visual appropriations are the effect of cultural acts of memory which are tied to aesthetic and poetic experiences of mediated memories at, for instance, a tourist sight: *sensing* (aesthesis)

the encountered and *making* (poiesis) something new of the encounter defines an act of appropriation.

I use ‘culture’ with memory for the accounts and things that are and have been in collective mnemonic action – its members – as well as what constitutes the action itself, the way it is re-member-ed.<sup>47</sup> The ‘cultural’ in memory focuses on the level of usage, on the remediation of mediated memories that are traceable, for example, in accounts of an encounter with objects that are heritagized in museums, monuments or other sites of memory. It is dependent on and composed of ‘appropriations’, the active reception and individual use of cultural artefacts or sites, ‘in which the appropriated is at the same time created, shaped and reformed’ (Jaeggi, my translation).

The ‘cultural’ highlights the participatory nature of memory work today, manifested in an individual creatively appropriating the stuff of memory and keeping their own image of it. Technology has made it easier for each of us to get our own image of another’s image of the past: All we have to do is take a snapshot or write in a guestbook, post something on a blog or Facebook, or, in the tourist’s case, post on TripAdvisor: we can share – without any apparent reaction – our own inscriptions on a memorial site with others. Such inscriptions need not be tied to human bodies only: places, objects like images, and sites of memory also change without human intervention. Material can inscribe itself on surfaces and act culturally.

This highlights two important shortcomings of current research in Cultural Memory Studies, which could have restricted the operationalization of my own research questions and my methodology: the assumption of a clearly demarcated community and a general anthropocentrism regarding cultural acts of memory (see Chapter 1). Observable as both the sum of an action (a cultural object that *has been made*), and the action itself (the making of this object, *designed action*), the cultural has both symbolic and material components. As Bolten (87f) remarks, the term ‘culture’ covers the reciprocal relationality between human and nonhuman actors that is described in actor-network theory. It refers to *practices* as both performances and entities: the creation of and the existing inscriptions on surfaces that participate in the remediation – the appropriation – of stuff. The stuff of memory in its connected form is ‘cultural memory’.

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<sup>47</sup> See also Bjørnar Olsen’s nice wordplay in this context; ‘to ascribe action, goals and power to many more “agents” than the human actor is to re-member things’ (“Re-Membering Things” 87).

Below, I outline how an actor-network methodology helps us to gather together all the participants in the visual event of cultural memory work by following their tracing activities.

### **Cultural memory as the effect of collective appropriation: Actor-network theory**

It seems almost intuitive to turn to ANT when studying cultural memory in tourists' practice<sup>48</sup> because the tourist encounter with sites of memory confronts us with the continuous formation of associations between objects and acts of remembrance, things and people, media and technologies, places and images, across spatiotemporal and sociotechnical relations, in short: a lot of different stuff that circulates and meets in different places at different times with unforeseeable effects. The life of objects and their changing materiality play an important role in both memory work and tourist practices. This calls for a methodology that takes the 'agency', the living, of things seriously.<sup>49</sup> Sometimes only the nonhuman – a ruin, graffiti, a photograph or any other mundane trace and remainder – carries memory or triggers acts of (human) remembrance.

ANT is a methodology in science and technology studies (STS) that serves to assemble the different parts of an action, like a scientific experiment, and observes and describes where it manifests as a more or less durable and stable whole, like an academic paper, or a visualization, like a graph. The question is: How is the cultural memory of a particular past assembled at memorial sites? How does 'it' attribute a certain visibility, and how is this visibility distributed among its participants – in the form of signposts, explanations, stories, visitors and their snapshots? How do these participants establish connections among themselves and affect or feed back to the memorial site, causing it to circulate and potentially transforming it?

Latour's work helps us to treat and analyse the event of the visual in cultural memory as the 'effect of collective activity' (Crawford) enacted by humans and

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<sup>48</sup> We can observe growing interest in the methodology of ANT in tourism and memory studies, where it is just beginning to evolve. See, for example, Jóhannesson, Ren, and van der Duim's *Actor-Network Theory and Tourism. Ordering, Materiality, and Multiplicity*; or Guggenheim's "Building Memory: Architecture, Networks and Users".

<sup>49</sup> Tim Ingold makes an important point about the current interest in the 'agency' of the material world. He calls for an understanding of *the processes of life* in general instead of highlighting the agency of materials: 'the current emphasis, in much of the literature, on material agency is a consequence of the reduction of things to objects and of their consequent "falling out" from the processes of life. Indeed, the more that theorists have to say about agency, the less they seem to have to say about life' ("Bringing Things to Life" 5).

nonhumans, by objects and other props.<sup>50</sup> The actants in these collectives are themselves relational effects, namely the outcome of ‘an exchange of human and nonhuman properties inside a corporate body’ (Latour, “On Technical Mediation” (OTM) 46).<sup>51</sup> We can understand cultural memory itself as the *effect of collective appropriation*, highlighting not only the collective act but specifically the mediating and transforming acts in making use of the past and its memories. We encounter a new inclusive community of memory, an actor-network enacted by and through a range of different people, things, accounts and technologies – all formed and performed along their relations and associations.

In the following paragraphs I outline three premises derived from actor-network methodology which I consider particularly suitable for the study of cultural memory work today: *entanglement*, *relationality*, and *traceability*. I take my clues from Latour but further develop all three concepts and methodological tools for the study of the visual in cultural memory.

### *Entanglement*

In its focus on the entanglement of the human and the nonhuman in actions, ANT has a non-anthropocentric agenda.<sup>52</sup> Throughout his work, Latour underlines the premise of *symmetry*, the symmetrical agency of objects and subjects, of humans and nonhumans, which basically makes any dichotomization between the two impossible because they are already entangled. In “On Technical Mediation” (45-46), Latour writes:

What is true of the “object” – [it] does not exist by itself – is still truer of the “subject”. There is no sense in which humans may be said to exist as humans without entering into commerce with what authorizes and enables them to exist.

Objects, therefore, play a crucial role in every ANT study. The Latourian notions of

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<sup>50</sup> Latour often uses the term ‘collective’ to point to *human* collectives (he does also give other ‘metaphors’ of the collective such as an ‘emerging structure’ (“Networks, Societies, Spheres” 13). But what the collective mainly underlines in ANT is the entanglement of human and nonhuman: ‘Humans, for millions of years, have extended their social relations to other actants with which, with whom, they have swapped many properties, and with which, with whom, they form *collectives*’ (OTM 53).

<sup>51</sup> Bruno Latour’s *Reassembling the Social*, my initial contact with his work, would by now probably be called *Reassembling the Collective*. See for instance his statement in “Networks, Societies, Spheres” (9): ‘The sheer multiplication of digital data has rendered collective existence (*I don’t use the adjective social anymore*) traceable in an entirely different way than before’ (italics added).

<sup>52</sup> The term itself is actually borrowed from Tim Ingold’s “Bindings Against Boundaries: Entanglements of Life in an Open World”. Latour also uses it at times but it is not as central to his work as other terms.



actor (the source of an action) and actant (something to which activity is granted by others; “On ANT” 373) cover a range of different memory objects and their various types of action: from a found photograph to a letter, from discarded ruins to purpose-built monuments, from an old woman telling her life story to her granddaughter to a cultural heritage professional designing a memorial site with the help of pen and paper, computers and programmes, from grass growing over a monument to the empty battery of a camera device, or to any thing or person disposed to become involved in memory work.

The ‘stuff’ of memory, so I argue in this chapter, is highly mobile and open to transformation and appropriation. It is constantly set in motion by a range of actors – people, accounts or technologies likewise – such as walls covered with scribbles, the pens that write on them, exhibited photographs, their frames, snapshots of them. These actors make memory travel beyond a clearly demarcated ‘local’ or ‘cultural’ community, which is still the focus of most research in Cultural Memory Studies. The actors relate in networked collectives that *entangle* many different ‘groups’. The entangling work of the net does not stop at cultural demarcations such as nation, race, gender or the differentiation into ‘locals’ and ‘tourists’. Here entanglement also adopts a second meaning.<sup>53</sup>

### *Relationality*

An ANT study focuses on relations and associations: how different actors work together in actor-networks, not how an actor-network as a whole organizes its relations. It implies observing how actors become tied (or untied) so that they enable and compose an action in a certain place at a particular moment, and which other actions are needed (or happen simultaneously) to make that particular actor act and the network function: What relations or associations does an actor build and how do actors *socialize*? Paraphrasing John Law, we can say that memory objects are ‘*efforts of their relations with other entities*’ (“Objects and Spaces” 93). This calls for a relational analysis of a memorial site, despite and beyond its territoriality, which is similarly describable through its associations. Law and Callon (“Lessons on Collectivity” 170) describe entities as networks to underline their relationality:

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<sup>53</sup> I am partly drawing this second meaning from my reading of Achille Mbembe (*On the Postcolony*) and Sarah Nuttall (*Entanglement*).

Entities (...) are sets of relations, for instance in the form of networks. And they are co-extensive with those networks. (...) [T]hey look at the way in which entities – people, technologies or texts – come to summarise the relations that make them up. (...) [E]ntities – human, technical and textual – are compound realities, the product of a process of composition.

We can ask: How is a snapshot that is taken at a site of memory composed, and what relations of the visualization does it compose? In *Reassembling the Social* (44), Latour writes that every action should be felt ‘as a node, a knot, and a conglomerate of many surprising sets of agencies that have to be slowly disentangled’. With regard to the task of disentangling the visual and its relations, the almost forensic interest we should bring to cultural memory, points to the third premise: traceability. We must ask how exhibition walls or snapshots summarize the relations that make them up. These entities point to a range of traces whose relations are discoverable – traceable – through observation or close reading.

### *Traceability*

ANT works through *tracing* – following actors back and forth between the associations they make and the actions they are involved in via the traces they leave.

Latour writes (“On ANT” 378):

ANT is not about traced networks but about a network tracing activity. (...) No net exists independently of the very act of tracing it, and no tracing is done by an actor exterior to the net. A network is not a thing, but the recorded movement of a thing.

This implicitly makes the researcher in my study part of the network of cultural memory that the exhibition space enables and describes. The act of tracing implies watching how the actors zoom in and out of their actions. To trace also means to actively look for associations without postulating them in advance, for example, when I think about the (after)life of a photographic image of an encounter with a memorial site, my task is to map the relations and constellations that brought this photograph into existence as well as the connections the photograph makes while circulating. Thirdly – this again goes beyond the aim of a strict ANT study – we can trace the scene of associations that an entity displays, not only the shaping of memory but also its ‘shape’.

As we will see, a snapshot of the scribbled walls in the Regina Mundi Church traces, that is, it lists a range of participants as its ‘contents’. Although the latter is not

the ideal term, nothing better underscores the different, traceable levels of the event of the photograph. The shape of the record is not of primary interest to ANT, which ‘places the burden of theory on the *recording*, not on the specific shape that is recorded’ (“On ANT” 374). Nevertheless, the specific shape is of interest here because it allows us to trace the work of cultural memory on yet another level of creative appropriation. Memory work can be traced through visual shapes like the ‘graffito’, or rather, certain visual entities trace a certain shape and list a range of accomplices in cultural products.

While the tourist snapshot entangles relational traces, as a researcher I seek to trace entangled relations in order to relate traceable entanglements. The three sensitizing concepts drawn from ANT imply a take on cultural memory that does not postulate any collective or dominant discourse. It does not differentiate between dominant and resistant acts of memory, or acts and agents of memory on one hand, and ‘mere’ references and passive documents of memory on the other: the point is to ‘learn from the actors without imposing on them an a-priori definition of their world-building capacities’ (Latour, “On Recalling ANT” 20). Tracing ongoing associations of cultural memory means to *reassemble* cultural memory<sup>54</sup> to be able to confront all agents active in enacting cultural memory including the not-so-popular (and sometimes overlooked) ones, who might nevertheless contribute in enriching, creative and even corrective ways.

### **Cultural Memory as the effect of collective appropriation: Transvisuality**

I approach cultural remembrance via a *material transvisuality*. Memory and the remembrance of the past are composed in circumstances that are visually and materially heterogeneous, where the material is active/visible at the same time that it is *made* active/visible. ‘Transvisual’ describes the many ways and situations in which visual acts of memory are entangled with a variety of visual materials. Both the acts and the materials are the effects of relations and transactions that culminate in still other visual ‘actors’ such as tourist snapshots or the discovery of an Instagram entry about a visit of a memorial site. Human action is seen as ‘*trans-acting* with its surrounding in processes which create and shape the individual and its surroundings

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<sup>54</sup> Here I am paraphrasing Latour, who defines the social as ‘a trail of associations between heterogeneous elements’ and sociology accordingly as the ‘*tracing of associations*’ (*Reassembling* 5).

simultaneously' (Ren et al. 17). Any visuality seen in ANT terms is also a transvisuality, enacted in 'zones of transaction' (Latour, OTM 45). Here, transvisual does not indicate different visual strategies and dispositions 'inside' a human body<sup>55</sup> but rather describes the associations that compose the event of the visual and their traceability. It highlights translation, transaction and actors' crossing in the visual. It observes the visualization of memory sites and their mediators – the practice/ doing of a range of possible views and looks, crossing each other and translating earlier views into new visions. Appropriation is a mutual act, a composition, by the one encountering the mediated memory and the materiality of the encountered memory.

Invoking Crawford's phrase about the central concerns of networks in ANT terms, 'manifest cultural memory' can be understood as a network that 'demand[s] continual maintenance' (2). Latour aptly writes that the actor-network acknowledges 'how many participants are gathered in a thing to make it exist and to maintain its existence' (Latour, "From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern" 246). In short, this is the ANT concept of translation, the composition of networks that are always in the making and open to – even dependent on – transformation and movement. Latour defines translation as 'displacement, drift, invention, *mediation*, the creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies two elements or agents' (OTM 32; italics added).

In the last decade, mediation and especially remediation have been central concepts in the study of cultural memory, describing how certain media of memory are reworked and thereby mediated in yet other media, 'the representation of one medium in another' (Grusin and Bolter 339).<sup>56</sup> The snapshot at sites of memory is one example, just as the snapshot of a photograph at a site of memory would be another, even more obvious one in Grusin and Bolter's reading. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (9) regard remediation as 'a form of diachronic intermediality and cultural memory as a transmedial phenomenon, which is realized, over and over, by means of those media technologies that a community has at its disposal'. The authors connect mediation to media *technologies* such as television, film, books or the Internet. What about the

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<sup>55</sup> Such a take on the transvisual was introduced by David Dibosa who defines transvisuality as 'a dynamic specular modality – a way of seeing or a means of negotiating a particular visual terrain that *can only be afforded through the experience of transmigration* – a kind of seeing on the move' which migrants perform (3) (italics added).

<sup>56</sup> See especially Erll and Rigney, *Media and Cultural Memory: Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*.

exhibition walls in the Regina Mundi Church? Don't they also re-mediate?

I use a Latourian concept of mediation that is more basic with regard to the notion of 'medium'. A medium can be any thing that makes a difference and takes part in translation.<sup>57</sup> Latour doesn't talk about media or medium but does differentiate between mediator and intermediary, active and to-be-activated entities, transforming actors and transporting actants. The notion of media in actor-network methodology is of interest only as *process*, as *mediation*, the *work* of networks. I will illustrate the work of mediation in practical research by looking at a few snapshots taken at the photography exhibition in Regina Mundi Church that show, among other things, the act of visitors making inscriptions in order to maintain sites of memory.

Tourist appropriations at the Regina Mundi Church in the form of visible inscriptions (notes left, photographs taken or even photographs taken of their own notes, see fig. 2 in the Introduction) mediate the inscribed surface by adding something to it, and mediate the further reception of the visited site and the history displayed there. The inscriptions translate the public appearance and appeal of a memorial site by enhancing the cultural forms of mediated memories. It is a form of mediation, whereby the term refers not only to the actual medium of recording and its reworking in yet other media – the photograph or the wall – but also to all the actors that are needed for this inscription to *manifest* and be maintained. Jane Bennett further develops this notion when elaborating her thing-power-materialism ("The Force of Things" 358):

To render manifest is both to receive and to participate in the shape given to that which is received. What is manifest arrives through humans but not entirely because of them: we bring something from ourselves to the experience, and so it is not pure or unmediated.

Putting a note on a wall of remembrance is a result, a composition, of the wall, a pen and human writing; it is an interaction between the walls that offer a space for a note and the human using a marker who puts a note there: both participate in note writing.

With regard to the visibility of a memorial site, we have to ask how cultural memory is visualized, what/who are the actors gathering to enable visual inscriptions and which visual techniques maintain the site-as-location and the sight as mediated

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<sup>57</sup> As media theorists such as Matthias Wieser have pointed out, new media philosophy in particular regards the Latourian concept of media as highly undifferentiated because Latour does not distinguish between the medium and the mean. Media become mediators only in their operative use (119-20).

memory? Law and Callon (174) help us to understand sites of memory as networks and points, individuals and collectives. While they are ‘discrete objects’, it can be appropriate ‘to treat them as *collective effects*- as patterned networks. And to explore the character of that *patterning*- a patterning that transcends the division between the individual and the collective’ (175). This also implies tracing and translating invisible (‘blackboxed’) actors into the visible: ‘What was invisible becomes visible, what had seemed self-contained is now widely redistributed’, writes Latour (5).

The redistribution of the ‘The Story of Soweto’ walls in visitors’ snapshots shows the mutual enactment of the exhibited photographs and the comments on the walls and indicates their unfinished, open character. Suddenly, the hand-holding-a-pen that wrote the comment and the wire-attached-to-a-nail that holds a frame on the wall become active and meaningful – *visible* in Latour’s terms – like the buses and taxis that bring local and international visitors to the site, the stalls where craft vendors store their goods and snapshots of the visit posted on Instagram and Flickr. The tourists and congregation members become so involved that they zoom in on a comment or a photograph mounted on the wall as a way of actively taking part in the actor-network of the exhibition.

How can we follow, that is disentangle, trace and relate, the work of mediation as involvement and translation, in short, *appropriation*, in our empirical studies and research practice? Below I present two ways of using found material derived from my methodological work with ANT concepts.

### **Method I: Zooming in and out of snapshots**

This snapshot by South African journalist Chris Roper that was published on his former blog and twittered on 5 June 2011, illustrates the composition of traces at Regina Mundi Church: first of all, it shows us one of the exhibition walls with all the comments. Second, as a photograph, it inscribes a particular situational and personal view of the exhibition walls online. The following methodological practice derived from actor-network terms transfers the traceability of accounts from the digital photograph and source to the site that it mediates and returns them to its mediator, the digital snapshot. The tourist snapshot is a brilliant example of how cultural memory functions, not least because it makes the memories communicated at tourist sights ‘migrate’, to quote Gail Baylis (4).



wonderful photos capture the  
events that brought the changes  
we have seen in Soweto (...)

In between these bigger comments written with markers we find shorter ones like ‘the youth was our heroes’ and ‘blacks for ever’, as well as a range of South African nametags like ‘PAPI MABE HEILBRON’ (a town in Free State, South Africa) or ‘Sibahle Mabaso’, and in the right corner the inscription:

SEXY T.  
2007  
holla back  
you know this

Judging from the name given to the published snapshot, the photographer was attracted by (what looks like) ‘graffiti’ in a church (which makes these walls resemble walls in public toilets or school hallways, as confirmed by a Google image search for ‘similar images’), meaning that this is a rather untypical shot of a memorial (tourist) sight. What made Roper focus on that particular comment could be the straightforward but at the same time political statement and Mpho’s slightly incorrect orthography, which is indeed eye-catching.

The comments refer to ‘the struggle’, to the ‘exhibition’ and ‘the photos’. However, we don’t know exactly *which* exhibited photograph and statement are being referred to. The ‘wall of remembrance’ (as it is called by the curator and others) existed before the ‘The Story of Soweto’ exhibition. Other photographs had already been displayed there in an earlier exhibition so we cannot know the exact reference of undated statements that refer to photographs or an exhibition. The continuing presence of (vanished) images in visitors’ comments is a fascinating aspect of how memories dialogue on the wall, transformed with each revision that completely changes the story – making the wall embody the ‘actual’ work of cultural remembrance, which is far from being transparent and fully traceable.

Let’s also look at a visitor’s photograph that features all the things referred to in the comments. Snapshots that literally give us a better idea of how the photos are arranged in the exhibition and how the walls and comments relate to each other are



quite rare.<sup>58</sup> Usually visitors zoom in on smaller details, either the comments alone or on individual photographs.



Fig. 6. Woody Wooduck: 'Johannesburg - Regina Mundi church'. 3 May 2013. Flickr.

Woody's snapshot resembles other attempts to capture a scene in the exhibition. It records and visualizes both his own encounter with the site and things that happen when no one is there to experience or record them, such as the coloured light reflecting on the frames and reflections of the windows or shadows of other visitors.

These digital snapshots help us to follow and make sense of the comments on the walls by zooming into the image. We can take time to study the details of the exhibited photographs or the various tags, maybe even more time than we would have taken while *actually*, bodily visiting the site. The act of blowing up parts (possible through high image resolution) becomes another act of disentangling the stories that make up 'The Story of Soweto'. This has also offered me as researcher a way to remain up to date and connected with what has 'happened' at and around these walls since June 2012 when I was there last. The snapshots have become a kind of

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<sup>58</sup> One reason for this could of course be that people only share and upload the images that they find most presentable. Perhaps the clear focus on a comment section or a photograph in the exhibit more closely conforms to photographers' ideas of presentability than a plain gaze into a site. Though most of the people I asked denied making a selection before posting and just uploaded all the images (that they hadn't already deleted while still travelling).

informant. Take, for example, one of the more creative contributions in the lower right corner of the image, just above the floor of the church gallery.

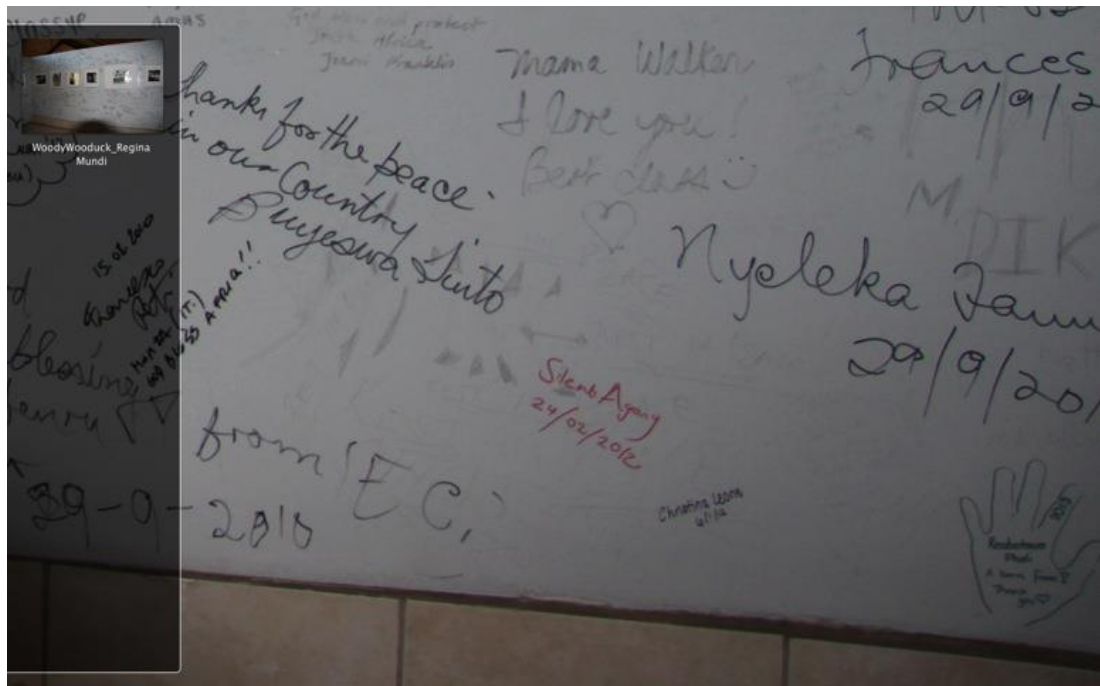


Fig. 7. Detail from Woody's photograph.

In 2013, Reabetswe Phati drew the outline of her left hand, signing it with her Sotho name and the statement 'A born free! Thank you ♥'. A bit further to the left Buyiswa wrote 'Thanks for the peace in our country', and on 15 August 2010 Francesco from Monza, Italy, added 'God Bless Africa!!'.

Zooming further into Woody's image reveals Chishimba from Zambia, parts of whose tag seem to have been wiped away, who commented: 'The past prepares u for the future'. I also see a German comment by 'Sebastian' below Bob Gosani's 1950 photograph of 'The Americans', a group of Sophiatown gangsters in a Cadillac, one of the photographs in the exhibition that is most often photographed: 'Gott segne dich!' (God bless you), dated 22/10/2010. A bit further to the right, Karabo Legodi wrote 'God is LOVE' on 28/2/2008. Obviously, since the location is a House of God, the Lord is present in many of the comments, making the walls a transnational ecumenical forum. My selection of quotes from the walls also illustrates that I change focus with each new act of zooming in, allowing me to step closer and follow words into different directions. The relationality of inscriptions and the actions we draw

from them is one of surprises: The story told in the graffiti changes with our point of entry into the wall or via snapshot's frame.



Fig. 8. Detail from Woody's photograph.

The snapshots help me to decipher the comments on the walls –from the lower left corner of the wall in the snapshot to the upper right corner and back again – to see what and who has been involved in the visible layering of these walls. The size and frame make the difference: at first, a small photograph (which, in terms of its resolution, is at the same time big) seems to offer a more compressed way of entering the stories told on the walls than the wall itself. Tourist snapshots condense what is happening (at 'work') here for me (and for others) while also showing what interested the photographer.

The next snapshot first attracted my attention because of its angle: It was taken from above with a wide angle, with the camera close to the wall. The snapshot highlights a comment by 'Cecelia' from 1/10/01 by making it parallel to the frame. In my text-copy of this snapshot by Flickr user taylor\_90, I focus on the written text and not, for example, the shadings of the wall or what is cut off at the margins or the many lines and scratches that cannot be deciphered as 'language': letters written there to 'mean' and communicate something. I concentrate on the words and letters that have textual meaning for me, which could be quite limited. Nevertheless, it is interesting to

zoom in on the stories in various languages that these walls, or the snapshots of them, transport and importantly, translate and transform: mediate.

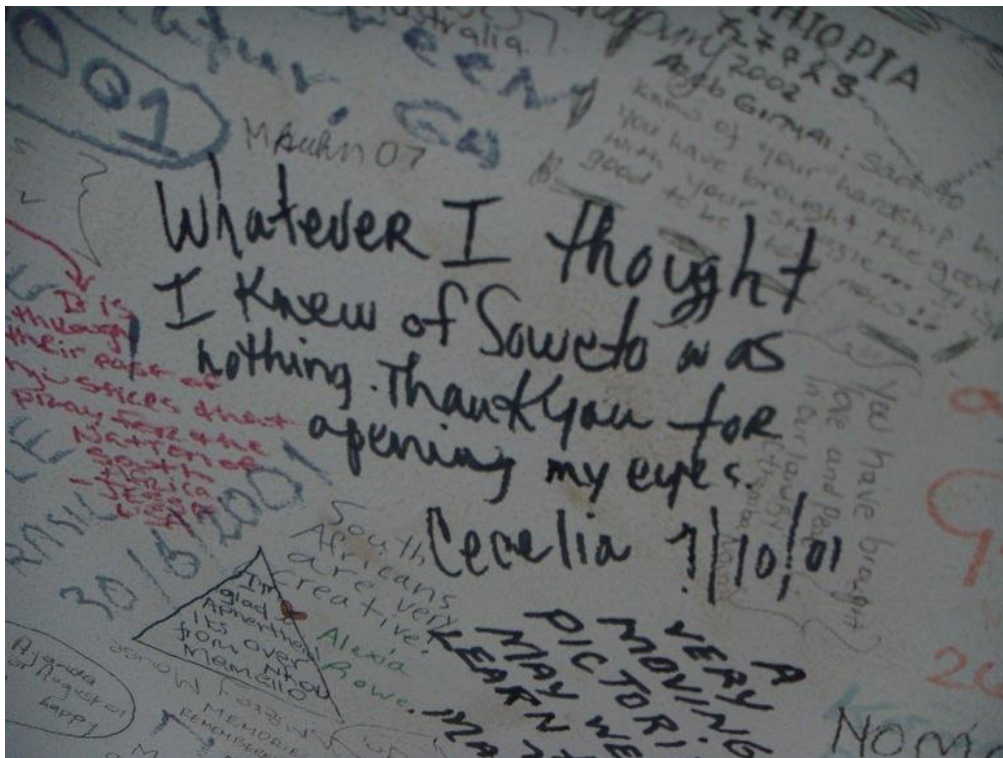


Fig. 9. Chris Deatrck (taylor\_90): 'Apartheid Photo Gallery in Regina Mundi Church'. 15 January 2009. They had a small apartheid photo gallery upstairs in the church. Also was a white wall where people had written messages.

When trying to unravel the comments I imagine how they are inter-related, for example, which was there first and how did the others react to it? Did they write over it or did they 'underwrite' a different comment, intending to leave an insignificant comment in the background? Besides the intuition of the writer and the writing hand, the writers could take no account of such factors as the strength of the ink or the amount of light that falls on that very spot, making their comment fade faster than others and thereby influencing perceptions of it.

My 'text-copy' also makes visible the different ways in which people draw margins around their notes to highlight them or to prevent other messages from being disturbed: Nkou Mamello draws a triangle, which is quite unique on these exhibition walls, and Azeb Girmai puts dashed lines around her comment. Viewers might as well reconstruct the act of writing on the wall through other small things: Cecelia, for example, slightly indented the line that starts with 'opening' to the right, which

suggests that she might have wanted to leave the comment in red to the left untouched – and that it predates hers.

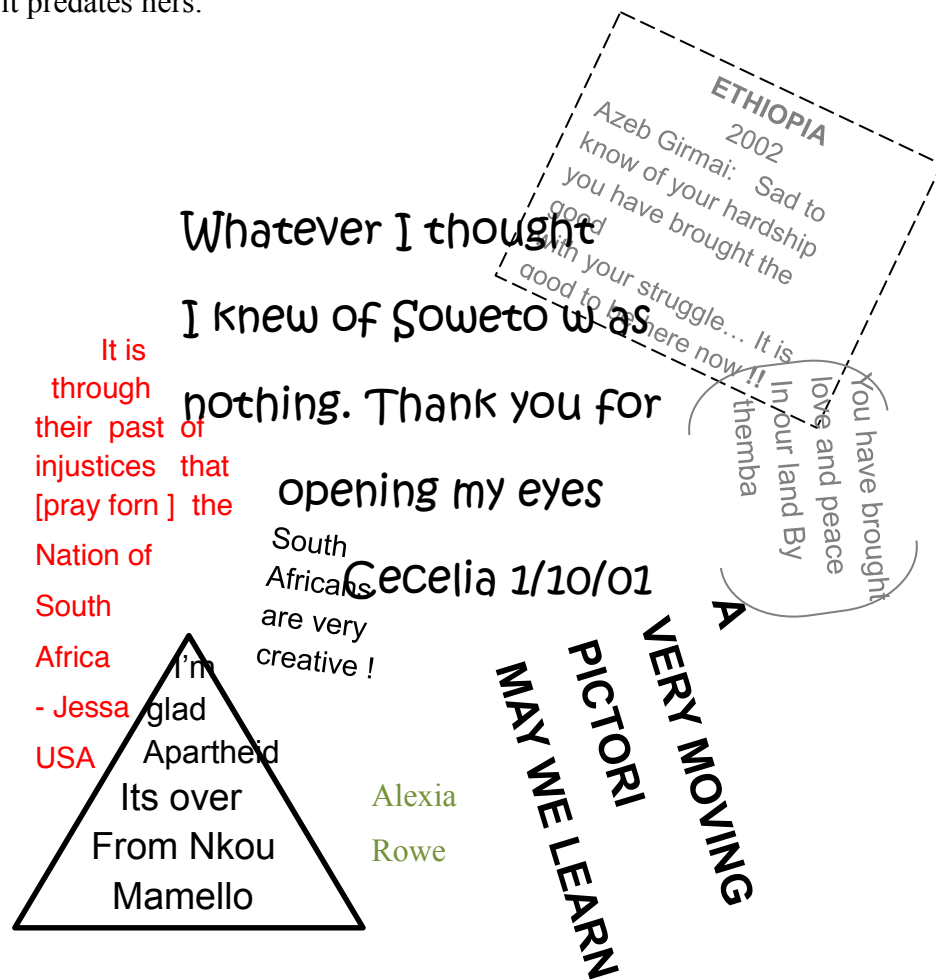


Fig. 10. ‘Text copy’ of Chris Deatrick’s photograph (fig. 9).

It is also possible that the smaller red comment tried to squeeze itself in next to Cecelia’s. In any case, this snapshot shows well how visitors to the exhibition reacted to the comments on the wall that were already there.<sup>59</sup> The visibility of the individual comments and their (visual) impact on other comments, future visitors and the entire composition of the walls, depend on many other factors besides time. Cecelia’s comment is older than most of the other notes and is the most visible – and was therefore the photographer’s focus. This is precisely the mediating work of the snapshot-as-mediator: Highlighting part of a larger whole helps the exhibition walls and part of their narrative travel beyond their territoriality, and acquire new meanings and foci.

<sup>59</sup> See Chapter 3 for a highly political discussion evolving among the comments.

On another level, that of the snapshot's distribution, the story told and traced by the snapshot is framed in yet other terms. Chris (fig. 9) names this and a few other photos posted of his/her visit to the Regina Mundi Church 'Apartheid Photo Gallery' though only two-thirds of the photographs were taken, or reference life under Apartheid. As I argue in Chapter 5, this might be connected to the way black and white photos embody what looks like the 'analogue past'. Of course it also points to the fact that this chapter of history has not yet been fully 'visually known' beyond, or even in, South Africa (see Hlongwane). Only recently have photographs from non-Western countries taken under colonial rule started to widely travel – in exhibitions and digitalization projects, as well as in ordinary snapshot appropriations online.<sup>60</sup>

### **Method II 'Write Your Name in History': Relating statements**

Another common reaction to the exhibition recently expressed in a TripAdvisor review of EnzoRSA's visit to Regina Mundi Church is entitled 'A holy place with lots of history'. His entire comment reads:

Bring a pen or marker to share your thoughts on the white wall provided at the back of the church. Again, no one to guide you, but then again, in the house of God, the last thing you would need is someone chit chatting away.

It is interesting that Enzo regards the walls as being 'provided' for him to leave his tag/name. Enzo also names a photograph of the scribbled walls that he probably took and posted as 'write your name in history' (see fig. 11). With his catchy encouragement to visit the church, he urges potential visitors to leave a comment on the walls for eternity (or at least for others to read in what he considers and names history). The snapshot that he posted shows the scribbled walls and a photograph by Bongani Mnguni taken on 16 June 1976, the day that peaceful student protests against Afrikaans as the language of instruction in African schools escalated into the 'Soweto Uprising' and the police fired teargas and live bullets at fleeing protesters. The comments on the walls review the photographs and other comments, remediating the exhibition within the exhibition, while this snapshot becomes a remediation of another remediation.

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<sup>60</sup> See, for instance, the photography exhibition 'Rise and Fall of Apartheid' at the International Center of Photography, New York (2012), Haus der Kunst, Munich (2013), and Museum Africa, Johannesburg (2015).

## Regina Mundi Photo: Write your name in history



Soweto, South Africa

Ranked #8 of 15 Attractions in Soweto | 17 reviews

"Educational" 01/22/2015 | "Cathedral of South Africa" 12/14/2014



Write your name in history (EnzoRSA, Jul 2014)  
A holy place with lots of history.

Fig. 11. EnzoRSA: 'Write Your Name in History'. 11 July 2014. Tripadvisor.<sup>61</sup>

Sbu Dladla, a local South African who visited the gallery in the church a few months after Enzo, also posted a few snapshots from his visit to his Instagram account, leaving advice like Enzo's: 'Our painful past is documented in pictures and people have left messages on the walls. Take a permanent marker when you go there'. Looking serious and almost devotional, Sbu obviously identifies with the ('our') past that the exhibition makes its visitors recall – or encounter for the first time as some of the non-local tourists may do. Like Chris, Sbu highlights the painful chapter of this past, though at least one-third of the exhibition images display more pleasant scenes of everyday life *after* Apartheid, such as Jodi Bieber's 1998 photograph 'One, Two, Three...' of three young couples posing for the camera at a dancing competition, and Themba Hadebe's 'Early Morning Shave Next to Hostel' from 2000.

On the wall behind Sbu we see other photos from 16 June 1976 such as army tanks entering Soweto and Bongani Mnguni's famous photographs (the two smaller ones to Sbu's left) of Soweto citizens raising their fists in the Black Power salute, in resistance to the oppressive apartheid system.

<sup>61</sup> Retrieved (20 September 2015) using Google Image Search, page 31.



Fig. 12. Screenshot of Sbu Dladla's (@sirdlala) #reginamundi Instagram post from 4 January 2015.

Sbu's statement and others have manifold references: Whose past is this? How can and do different people refer and react to, or even relate, to it? How do visitors, their comments and snapshots use the mediated memories to trace the exhibition to a particular chapter of the past or the present and the future? Mpo Scheeper names the *Azanian* people, specifically Black Africans. When Patrick Delahanty, a Catholic priest from the US, who visited the church as part of his trip to South Africa for the Soccer World Cup in 2010, answers me via Flickr, he connects the struggle depicted in the photographs to the struggle of African-Americans:

(...) and because we are from the U. S. and have a history of racial discrimination we were interested in the struggle for freedom undergone by black South Africans.

I am a Catholic priest and had a particular interest in the role of the church in some of that history.

We did not know what we would see and were unaware of the gallery upstairs. I was fascinated by the notes on the wall because they expressed so much hope for the future of the nation. People sensed that a certain victory has been one but there are still struggles to face, like the poverty mentioned in at least one note.

This resonates for me because it is true also of the U.S. Our law now protects everyone, but law does not end discrimination nor does it change hearts.<sup>62</sup>

Elizabeth from Maryland wrote: 'Thank you for sharing your history with us!' But what does it mean when a German tourist writes on the walls 'May we never forget' or

<sup>62</sup> FlickrMail correspondence of 20 May 2013: kcadpchair to frau\_ka.



when an Australian visitor writes ‘MAY WE LEARN’? Who is *we*, or rather, who can be *we*? How do the walls and snapshots of it trace this ‘we’ and trace ‘us’, is one question we can ask about and pose to the material. Does remembering here become a shared act – or does it exist at times in the sole misappropriation of an *other*’s history and historical achievement? How do the various commenters regard the act of leaving a note? The statement ‘write your name in history’ makes that history include all who decide to join in. When it comes to writing oneself into history, people have various reasons: a comment by one Henrico Coetzer (most likely a South African) to Chris Roper’s Instagram post of his visit to the exhibition (see fig. 2 in the Introduction) suggests that Henrico might have believed it was illegal to write on the walls, an act of vandalism that belongs to the Western tourist venture: ‘That is horrible! Go Back to the US’ is his reply to Chris’s caption for his snapshot, ‘left my mark in a historical landmark’. In any case, the very different appropriations and concerns united in the many realized snapshots taken of this sight are worth noting, as is the fact that the site itself continually offers the possibility for someone else to creatively write over an offensive comment. It is this relationality and entanglement that the snapshots make us trace and track.

We have seen that collective appropriation appears on at least three levels: the experiential level of encounter, the level of mediation, and the level of shape and content. On the level of the live encounter with the exhibition in the tourist practice, the memory of the anti-apartheid struggle and everyday life in Soweto from 1950 to 2000 is co-created by the visitors, their markers and recording technologies. It exists in an interplay of the exhibition and the many visitor interventions into it, that continuously change its appearance. The second level of appropriation is manifested in re/mediations, visitors’ acts of transporting the site outside of the localizable exhibition space – in stories and especially, in photographs. On this level, the snapshots and the people who take and share or comment on them appropriate jointly. On yet another level, that of the content of the exhibited images and the stories in the comments, appropriation is a collective act as no single narration dominates: This is a diverse reading of the memories of Soweto and a collective act of writing oneself into history and commenting on that.

### **Working with photographs and ANT – a deliberative progress report**

What would Latour, or any other ‘proper’ ANT researcher (unlike me), think of my work with the snapshots? We probably agree that photographs cannot be ‘applied’ as ‘mere’ illustrations, and that if they appear as visualization accompanying a written text, in one way or the other they should always put forward, or translate, the argument.<sup>63</sup> We would also agree that photographs are more than references or referential documents of our research practice in the field. Nevertheless, my work differs quite substantially from, for instance, Latour’s ‘photo-philosophical montage’, an essay where he deploys what could be called his ‘field photographs’ as a visual guide and source of the written text. In an entanglement of text and image, the captions describe his observations accompanying three soil scientists researching the Brazilian forest (“Le ‘Pédofil’ de Boa Vista”). As usual, he reflects modestly on his research practice and ways of drawing conclusions from field observations all through the text.

In my account, Latour would probably miss a more careful description of what is happening at the Regina Mundi Church – the actions leading to recording a snapshot and the many more techniques and technologies they trace. In turn, in his essay I miss a deeper engagement with the visual ‘content’ of these photographs, its traces and shape. Two images are particularly exquisite (Figure 11.7, p. 185 and Figure 11.8, p. 188) where Latour photographed the researchers through the leaves and branches of plants. Below his *Figure 11.7*, he does not first describe what is shown in the image (this is what he did with the preceding photographs) or how and in which situation it was taken, but instead starts with a self-critical comment about the predictable and outdated narration traced by the preceding photographs-cum-captions. Then he suddenly returns to the image in which ‘nothing is sharp’ (186). He explains – we do not see it in the image – that ‘We’re in the jungle’ (no longer in the laboratory) where it is hard to make out the researchers against all the green. They are standing by a hole, talking.

Latour doesn’t explain why he took the photograph that way; he leaves us to guess at a few answers but he does not explicate them. I like the image a lot, both as a

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<sup>63</sup> I should refer here to the criticism by Amit Ray and Evan Selingers of Latour who, proclaiming to be a critic of unreflected borrowing to ‘illustrate’ a point, has done exactly that when it comes to postcolonial cultural productions. His analysis ‘fails to uphold its own rigorous aspirations when it reduces complex literary and cultural representation to universal allegory’ (“Jagannath’s Saligram”).

photograph and as a stance on the ‘fieldwork imagination’. But this kind of positioning is rather untypical for ANT – by its invisible nature: it is only ‘photo-philosophically’ *implied*. (His *Figure 11.7* therefore reminds me of *oversights* in the photographs that I discuss in Chapter 5.) Latour does eventually describe the situation in which the photograph was taken, and describes, or rather traces, his motivation to stage it like that. He even hints at its meaning for the argument that the essay brings forth, but he never takes the photograph seriously as a visible scene or shape ‘on its own’. I would argue, however, that the image *does* a lot and traces even more. This brings us to an earlier Latour quote, where he wrote that ANT focuses on the (act of or leading to the act of) recording instead of the *record*. I believe that a network’s tracing activity does not stop at the level of the shape of the recorded, at the record itself, but also entangles what is visually active ‘within’ the visual record – as do the snapshots that I describe here. They are as complex as all the other actors we encounter at sites of memory and they visibly share and declare many of their traces. They importantly feed back to the scene of their becoming: the site of memory and its photogenic nature.

### **Collective appropriation: From mediation to patternings of sites**

Following up on my attempts to disentangle memory work through tourist snapshots, we could ask if it is possible to make out a specific *patterning* (Law and Callon) in ‘The Story of Soweto’, which lets us trace – deduce or conclude – a certain pattern for mediation at this site of memory. Suddenly, viewing ‘The Story of Soweto’, the exhibition space and the encounters with it, as an actor-network shows how cultural memory *works*. What maintains it as a site of memory, are not only the institutions that present it as an exhibition, ensuring that things remain in place and nothing is vandalized (actually no one, or better not *one* institution or body, is responsible for its technical maintenance), and that visitors are safely ferried to and from the place, etc.

It is the human visitors that find it memorable and their markers, pens and comments that co-create it, their memories that transform it and their cameras which help to record and distribute the scene. Even when no humans are there, the walls are at work. All these actors make past events find their way (or not) into re-mediated memory, maintaining the memorial site and continue its existence. Curator Claudia Schadeberg repeated three times in emails that ‘The Story of Soweto’ is a *permanent*

photography exhibition – which is an interesting remark about a space that seems to be deciding its future ‘on its own’. The exhibition is permanent in its becoming and in its lively gathering of memory work. But it is anything but permanent with regard to its constellation and shape at a specific moment or in any of the records made of it: it is permanently on the move.

Paraphrasing Latour, I would like to argue that cultural memory ‘vanishes when it is no longer performed’ (*Reassembling* 37). Culture designates a ‘type of connection’ between things rather than a fixed entity or attribute (*Reassembling* 5). A composed (manufactured, created) trace left for others to find, or at least able to be found, traceable, like the comments on the walls or the snapshots already discussed, is a cultural trace: it is defined by the relations that created it and that it creates. Latour writes: ‘Whenever a network is deployed, a substance is transformed from an object into a thing, or to use my terms, from a matter of fact to a matter of concern’ (Latour, “Networks, Societies, Spheres” 5). The durability of the wall-as-site, the way the wall furthers the work of cultural memory, is enabled through the variety of its materials and the participants who continuously reorganize them: ‘[W]hat circulates (...) is defined by the competence it is endowed with (...), the performances it is allowed to display’ (“On ANT” 378).

When we start to disentangle objects and sites of cultural memory during the research process, we realize that a snapshot is neither simply a material image, nor is it merely its content or what can be seen ‘in’ it, but that it *gathers* all the acts and technologies that created it, as well as everything that was invisible at the time the photograph was taken, but becomes visible when we later zoom in to it. We realize that a tourist at a memorial site is not just a passive consumer of arranged and immobile memory objects, but takes part in memory work at various levels – by engaging with and relating to other actors, such as the displayed photographs or the snapshot-to-be and the camera taking it. A complex network of actors permits an ordinary tourist snapshot of an archival photograph to make the event of the visual in cultural memory not just a matter of *fact* – a reference for the researcher or a witness of recent history – but also a *matter of concern*, a composed net of visual negotiations. The act of concern has a double meaning here. I understand it as both attention to and responsibility or even anxiety about something. The exhibition could be said to need *care*.

What patterning of care does the exhibition trace? Not all memory sites enable the same diversity of actors and compositional tools to participate in their maintenance, and not all sites inspire the same amount of participation and intervention. Sites are *more or less* open to mediation and appropriation, the way a visitor can be more or less open to being impressed. Two *patterning*s of memorials-as-networks make them particularly open to translation and transformation, inviting mediation and *affording* participation:

1. Memory sites as *unfinished* patterning – with visible gaps and voids: the church walls in this and the following Chapter as well as the case of the photograph in Chapters 5 and 6.
2. Memory sites as an *ordinary, unremarkable* patterning which, because of its ordinariness, ‘masks’ the material traces to a difficult past: the bunker in Chapter 4.

Both types of patterning invite mediation to a degree that maintains the memorial, the mediated memories or heritage as a (matter of) concern in the realm of the visual, albeit in very different ways.<sup>64</sup> But why and how is any actor/actant made or delegated to act? What makes a visitor enter the composition by leaving a comment or taking a snapshot and sharing it with others, perhaps even with an anonymous audience online? Now I have to venture into a recent topic of discussion in the humanities regarding ‘affordance’ and juxtapose it with my notion of ‘appropriation’ to understand how sites are not just appropriated by visitors but also appropriate visitors’ movements, views and visualizations.<sup>65</sup>

### **Sites appropriating views – affordance in transvisual terms**

The whole exhibition is an interactive participatory artwork that is what it shows: an assembly of assemblies, a parliament of parliaments, a new type of political gathering. The entire exhibition responds to the visitors’ behavior. The visitors act as representatives of the public sphere and they construct the public sphere.  
(Latour and Weibel 104)

Increasingly researchers of the experience of objects are borrowing from the fashionable concept of ‘affordance’ to indicate a certain influence and ‘agency’ of the

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<sup>64</sup> The particular visuality of both paterning is explored in Chapter 5.

<sup>65</sup> See “On Creative Appropriation” by Tucker et. al and my Introduction.

nonhuman environment. After ‘performance’ had its turn, it was time for ‘agency’ and various theories about the ‘entanglement’ of human and nonhuman, spaces and actions, and things and their consumption. Affordance is also mentioned in studies that used to be solely focused on human perception in order to add a note of recognition and awareness about the agency of the nonhuman and its participation in, and influence on, human action.

In the context of tourist studies, for instance, John Urry added a note on the ‘visual affordance’ of tourist places in his latest edition of *The Tourist Gaze*.<sup>66</sup> In the field of visual studies, Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly situate affordance in *Visuality/ Materiality* – much as I do – in the co-constitution of visuality and materiality: ‘What people do with the affordances of particular objects is, in part, to coproduce visualities’ (4). Visuality is a relational act, an effect of the collective activity of people and objects: ‘the sensory affordances of materials can also incorporate a pluralistic account of reactions and interpretations that lead to *histories*, *memories* and *ecologies of seeing*, feeling and perceiving’ (5).<sup>67</sup> This resonates in my transvisual methodology, which specifically locates affordances across the visual.

In the study of cultural memory, affordance has also been used to state that some things *have* affordance and some do *not*. Sharon Macdonald (“Reassembling Nuremberg”), for example, concludes that things which ‘have particular affordances’ (the limestone crumbles of the Nuremberg court in her example) may also potentially have ‘certain mediatory effects’. The term also resonates in Alison Landsberg’s notion of ‘prosthetic memory’ which ‘emerges at the interface between the person and a historical narrative (...). In this moment of contact, an experience occurs’ – it is afforded by media of memory – ‘through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history’ (2). Recalling ‘The Story of Soweto’, the affordances of encountered scenes or sites of memory seem to vary; obviously some are particularly *patterned* to afford. They offer a wide range of ‘modes of engagement’ (Jill Bennett

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<sup>66</sup> He echoes Thrift’s non-representational theory and its proposal to ‘take the energy of things’ sense-catching forms seriously’ (Thrift 9).

<sup>67</sup> The original concept, more or less knowingly referred to in most studies, is James J. Gibson’s “Theory of Affordances” in his *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Gibson begins by positing that landscapes or other surfaces afford to be used (by animals, in his example) in certain ways: they are flat or hilly and therefore afford to be used in certain styles of moving forward (127ff). Latour makes a reference to Gibson’s notion of affordance in a note when he writes that things might not determine the action, but ‘things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid, and so on’ (*Reassembling* 72).

14), expressed in the possible uses that cultural material promotes and the invitations to be mediated and appropriated it announces: ‘do something with me’.

The most well-known example of an affording object or scene in actor-network terms is probably a gun (Latour, OTM 31f) or a door hinge. The camera’s shutter release is similarly affording and so is a scribbled, partially white exhibition wall with comments making way and saving space for more notes.<sup>68</sup> Further does a framed photograph in an exhibition (among many other things) potentially afford being looked at. In the case of the tourist photograph, a thing or scene or moment may afford having its picture taken and support appropriation. Talking about their exhibition project, ‘Making Things Public’, Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel outline how the exhibition *responds* to visitors’ behaviour that in turn constructs the public sphere. We can trace something similar in ‘The Story of Soweto’: its correspondence (Ingold) and the responsibility connected to it are what make and relate a scene of affordance and appropriation.

Claudia Schadeberg also mentions the experience of both Patrick (above) and me (and most other visitors I talked with) that one tends to come across the exhibition by chance: ‘We’re glad to hear that you found our permanent exhibition at the Regina Mundi Church interesting and memorable. It doesn’t get much publicity so people tend to come across it by chance’.<sup>69</sup> This is a crucial moment in sightseeing connected to another issue that I examine in Chapters 4 to 6: How does the fact that we happen upon a photography exhibition change the way we experience and appropriate it? Do memorial sites which are being overlooked most of the time gain a particular importance and place in our memories – the way people with whom I emailed repeatedly emphasized, even three years after our initial contact?

When it comes to the affordance of a memory site with regard to its visuality and visual appropriation, the arrangement of things and the angles in which they present themselves and can be seen are also significant. In the case of the Regina Mundi Church, light filtering through stained-glass windows leaves blue, orange and yellow reflections on the glass frames of the photographs, a favourite motif for visitor snapshots: The photo-graphic practice literally becomes one of manifold light writings

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<sup>68</sup> In a reading of actor-network theory in relation to media studies, Matthias Wieser underscores the ‘prescriptions’ (111) of technologies like cameras, their ‘disciplining and enabling dimensions’ (112, my translation) that are connected to their affordance.

<sup>69</sup> Email from 11 April 2013: schadeberg@t-online.de to frau@hum.ku.dk.

and recordings. Sometimes affordance only becomes manifest in the image, for example, a discarded ruin may be barely visible at the time an image is taken, but is very clear in a photograph and affords our attention. I develop these observations further in Chapter 5 where I introduce four different modes of *oversights* to describe the ways in which presence and absence, as well as visibility and invisibility, become entangled in cultural memory work.

Affordance is an important part of creative appropriation and transforms these into relational acts. Affordance and appropriation depend on a situation in which one (thing, person, scene etc.) affords while the other one (thing, person, scene etc.) reacts to, joins the affordance, or appropriates. The snapshot of the exhibition is an excellent example of the symmetry underlining the mutual affording. There is no photograph without a motif, a recording device (a chip, a film or an SD-card), a person to press the shutter release, light, and, arguably, a surface or material and a person (or other computing, mediating actor) to look at it, acknowledge its existence and thereby play a huge part in maintaining it.

Some constellations of relational acts at sites invite and afford more participation and appropriation than others, like the two patternings I described above. Opening for an encounter, they ‘offer participants arenas in which to gather’ (Latour, “Critique” 246). As I argue in this chapter, certain sites of memory become particularly inviting forms. Often connected to some constellation of invisibility and the presence of absences and voids, these sites afford inscriptions and appropriations and impress visitors more than other sites. They help to make visitors want to inscribe their encounters with the sites in ‘the world’; the inscriptions may then become mediators of cultural memory in the Latourian sense. The effect of *entangled* collective appropriations, they list the *relations* they make with different actors (such as media, sites, groups of people) and actualize what a mediated memory has to say in the present: they make the past *traceable* in the future.

### **Conclusion: ANT and the study of snapshots in cultural memory**

This chapter is not a strict actor-network study, but rather explores methodological approaches to the dynamic work of cultural memory, drawing from central concepts in actor-network methodology – entanglement, relationality, and traceability. This made it possible for me to make sense of my overall scene of interest: the interplay of



creative appropriation (as Latourian ‘mediation’) and the affordance of memorial sites. When ‘The Story of Soweto’ begins to be circulated and mediated in tourist accounts, layers are added to the event of the visual in the work of memory: it becomes an act of collective appropriation across a range of visual forms. The individual site/sight makes relations that transcend the visual and the material; like Google Street View screenshots, this happens beyond human intention and human-driven relations.

My interactions with this chapter’s snapshots demonstrate that, when slightly adjusted for research engaging with visual materials, Latourian concepts are indeed helpful for analyzing visual material and visual practices at memorial sites. The remaining chapters will all present different accounts of the scene of collective appropriation of (sites of) memory in the tourist practice. The bigger part of them has been written prior to the current chapter, so that the introduced concepts – entanglement, relationality, and traceability – resonate, but are not all explicitly referred to. The next chapter also focuses on the Regina Mundi Church as an actor-network and offers more close reading of snapshots as mediators, following the relations and traces they make.

### **3. The Agency of Memory Objects: Tracing Memories of Soweto at Regina Mundi Church**

#### Abstract

The famous Regina Mundi Church in Soweto, South Africa, is home to a barely noted photographic exhibition: 'The Story of Soweto'. This article analyses the multifarious acts of cultural memory taking place in the small, almost hidden, exhibition space, where visitors for instance can leave their names and comments on the exhibition walls. These inscriptions constitute a preferred motif for domestic and international tourists' snapshots, projecting the scribbled walls beyond the exhibition space. The article introduces a methodology inspired by actor-network theory to the field of memory studies, showing, among other things, how the snapshots as participatory interactions with the exhibition can act as mediators of memory.

#### **Remembering apartheid in Soweto**

Since the fall of apartheid, South Africa has witnessed an inflationary construction of public commemorative sites and sights, a process that is significantly fuelled by the heritage tourism industry (Marschall 99), which leads to ever more 'memorial upgrades', not least in the townships' urban landscapes, where the 'memory boom' often focuses on physical markers of the liberation struggle (Hlongwane 138). Soweto's 'tourism reflexivity', as Mimi Sheller and John Urry call the global monitoring and development of a place's touristic potential (3), is booming, particularly since the 2010 FIFA World Cup that took place in South Africa; theme-park-like memory sites have been established, such as Vilakazi Road, which commemorates the June 16 1976 Uprising.<sup>70</sup> In many places this development seems to culminate in a monument fatigue on behalf of the visitors who no longer see the past for the monuments (Huyssen, "Monumental Seduction"). In other places, such as the exhibition discussed in this essay, the unexpected meeting with others' pasts and memories leads to more dynamic forms of commemoration that are constantly reanchored in the present. Soweto offers a shifting 'memory assemblage' (Macdonald; Reading) of sights and oversights – a mixture of celebrated and highly visible, and overseen or even forgotten everyday memorials and sites of memory that are recorded

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<sup>70</sup> Although most of the memory sites are situated in the middle of Soweto, they seem detached from the township's everyday life, which makes them appear like different stations in a memory theme park. This impression is even enhanced by an overuse of colourful signposts.

in tourists' photo albums, distributed on platforms online, sent via email, or digitally shared with family and friends.

The article zooms in on the site of the small photographic exhibition 'The Story of Soweto' and its mediations via tourist snapshots. This exhibition is a rather unimposing documentary exhibition on the balcony of Regina Mundi Church, the oldest Roman Catholic Church in Soweto, which once was a strategic site for the anti-apartheid struggle and now serves as a forum for the commemoration of its victims and heroes. Photographs (mainly black and white and a few in colour) by famous South African photographers, Bob Gosani, Jürgen Schadeberg, Jodi Bieber, and Bongani Mnguni, are assembled on simple, white, movable walls, displaying everyday life and the joys and struggles of Soweto from the 1950s to the present. Moving closer, one detects the unusual texture of the not so white walls, which are scribbled over and over with notes and names, dates and remarks about the exhibition, South African history, different Black Consciousness movements, worldwide freedom struggles, Nelson Mandela, God, religion, as well as local soccer team cheers, declarations of love, and name tags.

These layers of different materials and accounts from different times highlight the palimpsestic nature of memory work at the exhibition space, recalling Huyssen's characterization of the city as a palimpsest 'being rewritten while previous text is preserved, traces are restored, erasures documented, all of it resulting in a complex web of historical markers that point to the continuing heterogenous life' of a mnemonic site (*Present Pasts* 81). My focus on the dynamic nature of the memory work at play in the exhibition ties in with recent calls in memory studies to recognize 'the superimposition and productive interaction of different inscriptions and the spatialization of time central to the work of memory' (Silverman 4) by finding ways to map the transmedial and transcultural nature of histories and memories and the practices of remembering and remediation tied to them (Erll and Rigney).

My analysis departs from people's ordinary interactions with and appropriations of traces of the past, particularly the past of others as encountered on a tourist trip. Visitors' photo albums of the exhibition and their memories of the visit at Regina Mundi Church as well as my own observations at the site build the background against which the dynamics of this Sowetan memory assemblage are analysed. The essay follows the ways in which cultural memory is formed through

people's ordinary appropriations of objects, sites, and texts of memory; it examines how memorial sites and objects are taken in, transformed, and mediated in everyday life by a range of different people. Additionally, it shows how the new accounts stemming from these encounters feed back into the life and materiality of memories, and thereby change the remembrance of, for example, the anti-apartheid struggle or postcolonial Africa in transnational discourses.

Sites and objects of memory evoke different perceptions and appropriations. An event or experience made physically manifest by a marked memorial site or object of some kind may be transformed and re-evaluated through the acts that give meaning to it and the media in which it is represented. No matter how concrete mnemonic products may be, Jeffrey K. Olick writes, 'they gain their reality only by being used, interpreted, and reproduced or changed' (158). Traces of the past are appropriated and transformed in everyday life by a range of different people, both consciously and unconsciously. These inventions take the form of participatory interactions with sites and objects of memory and the cultural forms that mediate and distribute them.

Tourist accounts reveal how the pasts and memories of others are woven into the tourist's own memorable experience. This is not to imply that every tourist visiting a place and learning about the past is struck by the same events, records the encounter on a range of media, or necessarily becomes a 'critical reader' of memory (Bal, "Introduction" x). Nor is it sufficient to say that all cultural heritage tourism is simply a form of commodification that has nothing to do with 'real' remembrance, a ready-to-consume package of a nation's history that has no impact on its visitors' lives. The relevance and resonance of the tourist experience and the memories it mediates lie somewhere in between the critical and the commodified positions. In what follows, I use an interpretive framework inspired by actor-network theory (ANT) as developed in Bruno Latour's *Reassembling the Social* (2005), which has in recent years become increasingly influential in the social sciences and the humanities, to demonstrate that tourist accounts may act as mediators setting into motion what an encountered 'memory actor', an account or object mediated at a memory site, can mean to other actors in the present.

The methodology that informed the findings of my research in and around Soweto is similar to what Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly describe as the 'situated eye', 'an attunement to the collective, multiple and embodied textures, sensibilities,

and productive meanings of the visual through the material, and vice versa' (4-5). I will approach the dynamic of the Sowetan memory assemblage that is initiated and embedded in Regina Mundi's small exhibition by zooming in on different tourist snaps and series of snaps of the space visited. These mundane photographic memories project the photographs and scribbled walls beyond the exhibition space, becoming proper agents of memory themselves, in line with Ariella Azoulay's call for an alternative to the privileged notion of the human agent (the photographer) at the expense of other actors in the event of photography (65). As will be shown, it is especially the material photograph, the wider photographed scene, and the photograph's reintegration in different contexts of reception that is of importance for the dynamics of cultural memory.

Doubtless, the layers of community affiliations tied to different cultural memories are particularly complex in the case I am discussing, as different imaginaries overlap in the tourist experience of South African memoryscapes. Next to the many local practices commemorating the traumatic colonial and apartheid past and the liberation struggle, there is still a tourist imaginary building on a century-old colonial mindset with problematic projections of Africa as Europe's exotic Other (Behdad; Salazar and Graburn). Rather than merely exploring the problematic representation and reproduction of stereotypes and their impact on a colonial cultural memory that has been discussed in postcolonial tourism studies (Wiegand and Knapp), this essay starts from the site of the single memory object, asking how a tourist photograph may function as both a material image and a mnemonic medium and how it acts on the images and imaginaries at play.

Tourism is one of the first practices that comes to mind when we think of a privileged gaze, of the right of the spectator, as Ariella Azoulay explains in *Civil Imagination*, to view others' traumas and difficult pasts (1). Tourism is, moreover, almost unthinkable without the snapshot, the taking of photographs, which, in the case discussed here, includes photographing photographs and visual remnants of others. On the privileged stage of heritage tourism, the visitor's photograph can and does develop a life of its own and adds to the life of the memory inherent to the cultural forms encountered and appropriated on tour, such as the exhibited photograph of a scene of struggle or liberation.

### **Sequencing Regina Mundi: A photo album chronology**

A typical photo album chronology of a tourist's visit to the church (based on an analysis of Flickr and Picasa web albums as well as private collections made available to me) starts with a snap of the church from outside. If visitors take a tour of the church with one of the tour guides, the series is followed by photos of the church's physical marks and visible 'wounds' from the liberation struggle that the guide introduces: a broken piece of the altar or bullet holes in the roof and windows of the church; further landmarks are the Black Madonna painting and the guestbook showing the signatures of Nelson Mandela and Barack and Michelle Obama. After the tour, the guide usually tells visitors that they are free to visit the exhibition on the balcony. Unaccompanied by the guide and his stories, visitors then choose themselves which photos to take in the exhibition, and, for example, which captions to frame.

Their photo series often start with a snap of the info plaque naming the title of the exhibition, its background, and sponsors – even if this plaque is hardly legible because of the intense tagging. It is typically followed by an image of one of the displayed photographs – most favoured are Jürgen Schadeberg's Sophiatown photograph 'We Won't Move' (1955), and Schadeberg's 'Mandela in His Cell' (1994) in Robben Island (see also figures 15 and 16). Interestingly, the subsequent photos in the album, often making up the majority of the images, are details of the scribbled walls, close-up views of individual comments or comment narratives, and notes commenting on photos. I will focus on two aspects of this memory assemblage that become apparent when visiting the site and following its journeys through other media: firstly, the mobility and transformation of the photographic displays through visitors' appropriations, and secondly, the shifting stories told by the sketches on the walls.

### **Populating photographs: Taking visual witnesses along**

Tourist photographs feed into the circulating vision and memory of a place or an image. They tell us a variety of things about its author, the time they were taken, the things and people they display as well as their agency at large. They reveal what mattered to their author in a certain situation, what looked interesting and was thought to make a memorable impression or can best capture the experience a person had in a particular place. Likewise, and importantly for this essay, they reveal how the

photographed scene or actors present in the field of vision caught the photographer's attention, attracted her gaze and drew her in. Furthermore, a photograph is a stage for everything that was present but unnoticed in the moment the photograph was taken, and only potentially noticed at a later point. These characteristics of the event of photography are of peculiar interest for the dynamics of memory in the exhibition at Regina Mundi, demonstrating the different stages of what Azoulay calls the 'activating gesture' of photography ("Photography" 66). This gesture is not only an act of the photographer, but one of the photographed scene or the material photograph itself. Azoulay promotes photography as 'an ontology of the many, operating in public, in motion. It is an ontology bound to the manner in which human beings exist – look, talk, act – with one another and *with objects*' (71). The photographic memories in and of the exhibition have no end; they are continuously forming new relations.

One visitor's series includes different snaps of Jürgen Schadeberg's photograph 'Avoiding the Pass' (1954), showing two black men seemingly hiding behind a wall in Johannesburg downtown when two white police officers are approaching.<sup>71</sup> The photographer first captures the whole photograph using a flashlight. As if to improve the image (the camera screen probably revealed the white flashlight bulb mark in the middle of the image), she then captures the same detail without using a flash—with the effect that she is now visible in the act of taking the photograph as a reflection in the glass frame. She finally takes a photo of the photograph's caption, a plaque naming photographer, title, year and a few words about the people and incident displayed. In all three photos, bits of extra light and other situational details are written onto the image; in many other similar images of different photographs in the exhibition taken by other visitors, we see blue and yellow reflections of the church windows on the glass frames, reflections of the photographer or other visitors, and flashlight bulbs in the middle of the picture: the original image gets crowded as it gathers experiences, people, and looks, and its texture changes.

By appropriating a photo in the exhibition and combining it with other images and impressions in another place, like an online photo album of a trip, the tourist's experience is co-acting in this memory assemblage. As Jean-Luc Nancy writes: 'The

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<sup>71</sup> See P1060913-P1060915 in Helene Duckert's ('Rosatomic') Soweto photostream on Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/17285281@N07/with/4454990502/> (15 November 2015).

image touches me, and thus touched and drawn by it and into it, I get involved, not to say mixed up in it. There is no image without my too being in this image' (7). The photographic display as captured in a tourist's image is given a place in the present situation and in encounters with future spectators. All images of images are therefore recontextualizations, appropriations of some earlier or even original image in the life of the photograph, photographer, or spectator. To cite Azoulay again: 'The encounter with the photograph continues the event of photography which happened elsewhere' ("Photography" 75).

Furthermore, the represented content of the image connects to other representations of the same image or scene, transforms them, adds to them, and reworks its cultural meaning and form. 'The photograph or the snapshot ... appropriate a brief difference', Nancy writes, 'an imperceptible alteration that thus becomes perceptible, present, indubitable ... Likewise do I appropriate myself' (101). Though Nancy's is clearly a phenomenological account, he is sensitive to the agency of the material or immaterial photographic image itself – its power to appropriate a difference, and visibly change accordingly. In the case of the tourist snaps of displays in the Regina Mundi church, there is an appropriation of art and memory within everyday life. The tourist snapshot becomes a creative actualization of an earlier photographic event, and, as a consequence of this actualization, slightly adjusts the encountered cultural memory, the exhibited photograph, to the new situation. 'The many users of photography', writes Azoulay, 'never ceased from inventing new forms of being with others through photography' ("Photography" 67). The very same material, an account of apartheid South Africa, for example, can present itself in different figurations, motivating different appropriations. It is this process of reworking, recognizing, and highlighting some details and playing down or leaving out others that characterizes the work of memory and generates a memory assemblage constituted through relational investments and shared mediations.

'The event of photography', Azoulay writes, 'is never over. It can only be suspended, caught in the anticipation of the next encounter that will allow for its actualization' (77). In short, I argue that some tourist snapshots of the visit at Regina Mundi Church actualize cultural memory's media and demonstrate what a memory image of a difficult heritage can mean to others in the present. Additionally, they visibly transform the images of the past available to us at this memory site.



### Inscriptions: Memory stories in the making

In their photos, visitors often zoom in on parts of the walls with no exhibited photos and take a snapshot of a small narrative in the form of a clipping of short dedications and scratches. These inscriptions seem to comment on each other and on the photographs next to them, revealing a further interweaving of different memorial media. Kevin DeGauk ('Sedativegunk') from Canada chooses such an image for his blog post on Johannesburg and Soweto (see fig. 13). As he notes: 'We were fascinated by these photos, so much so that our guide Mandy had to come and find us and drag us out because we were dawdling too much'. Although expressing his fascination for the photos, the image he chooses to illustrate the scene on his blog is one of the scribbled wall. The image focuses on a comment by 'Elke from Germany', written in big black letters over many smaller comments, which reads: 'I'm deeply touched of this exhibition and of all what I see here in Soweto and I have a deep respect for your fight and you already have reached. I hope a lot of people will see these impressive exhibition.' (18.06.01).

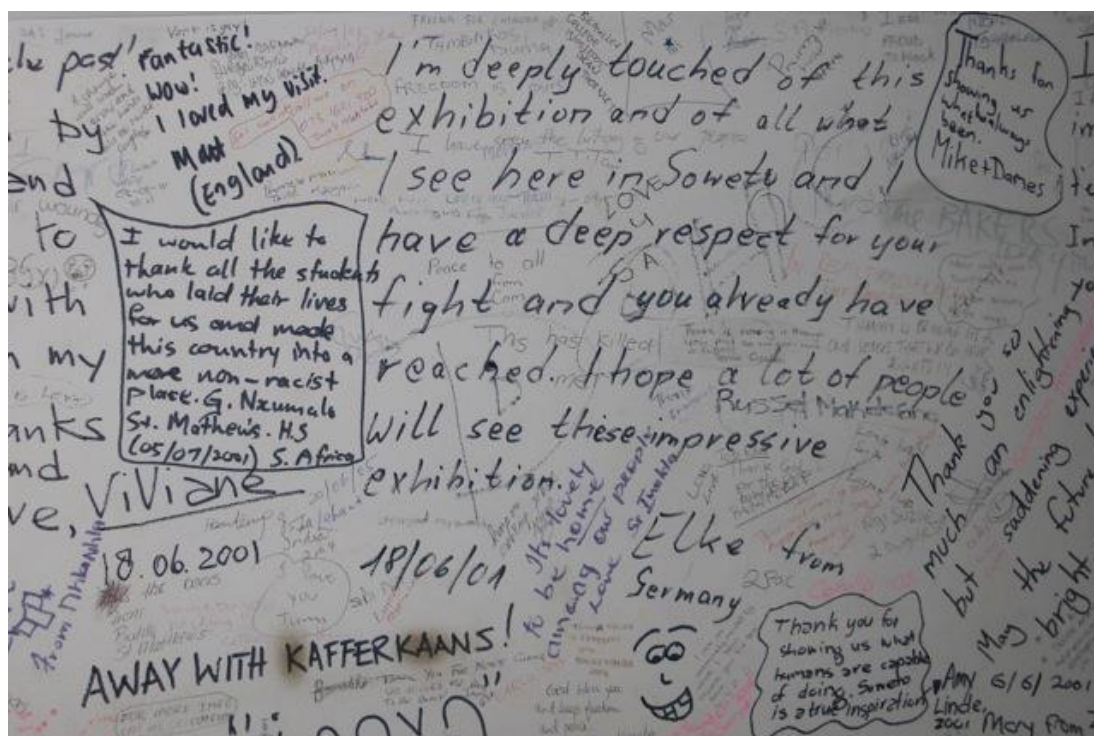


Fig. 13. Kevin DeGauk: 'Messages scrawled in the photo gallery of the church'. 16 August 2005. <https://sedativegunk.files.wordpress.com/>.

In between these lines other comments read 'This has killed me', and 'I am so extremely moved by what I saw. Thank you for the tour'; 'Thank you for showing us

what humans are capable of doing. This is a true inspiration, Amy June 2001’.

Different South African visitors write ‘I would like to thank all the students who laid their lives for us and made this country into a more non-racist place. G. Nzumalo, St. Matthews H.S. (05/01/2001), S. Africa’, ‘It’s lovely to be home’, and ‘Thanx Nelson Mandela for freedom, Bonolo Madiba 2004’. Other quotes read ‘God bless you and keep freedom and peace’, ‘Thank you for never giving up makes me proud to be black, Jane, US’, or even ‘I love you Tumi’ and ‘For more info call me on 073-..., Jacob Motshabi’.

This mixture of international and domestic tourists’ as well as locals’ expressions of gratitude, belief, and solidarity, entangled with everyday extraordinary or minor joys like declaring one’s love or heading for other business (‘call me’), is what makes these walls unique mundane – or what Joyce Van de Bildt elsewhere in this volume calls vernacular – memorials, working their way into each other’s and people’s vision. Visitors find in the photo exhibition what Jill Bennett calls ‘a blurring of memorial spaces and the ordinariness of everyday places’ (99). The ability to move its visitors depends on the openness of this memorial’s ‘mode of engagement’ (Jill Bennett 14): the constant transformation of the exhibition walls and the whole memorial space of the church is what makes this a dynamic memorial and a lasting site of negotiation. It is the playful association of vanishing, overwriting, and preserving that the walls exercise, putting in dialogue reflections about an extraordinary past, everyday business, rehearsed commemoration, and future aspirations, that many choose to capture in their photographic souvenirs of the church.

While the listing of names and their inscription into stonewalls is a common memorial practice, the distinctive feature of the gallery walls at Regina Mundi is their openness toward new comments and the rather unforeseeable associations each comment enables. The visibility and durability of names and comments depends on a number of random or only partially intended factors such as the amount and type of light falling on a spot, the quality of the pen used, and the fact that some comment or framed photo overshadows other comments, which is also dependent on how well-liked and welcomed a certain comment or critique is. That being said, one wonders what distinguishes these walls from other tagged and scribbled walls in public toilets or bus stops – which they do certainly resemble, not least visually. Most striking is surely their rather unique location. A location like a church would usually prohibit

people's inscriptions in the form of scratches and tags, as would a conventional exhibition space or monument, where people's inscriptions are routinely treated as vandalism. Imagine an exhibition space such as a gallery or museum that lets marks of former displays remain visible – that, for instance, keeps the info plaque of a painting that no longer hangs on the wall in place and lets it interact with exhibitions to come. 'The Story of Soweto' does exactly that and allows us to trace back the constant act of overwriting and substitution, renovation and refurbishing that such a cultural display performs, irrespective of whether it leaves visible or decodable traces for posterity. At Regina Mundi, we get a grasp of what was before and what comes after the display of the photos.

Many of the comments, or an earlier layer of such comments, were there before the photographs were displayed in 2003, building the ground for the images displayed today, and for visitors' inscriptions that have been added since. Comparable to an advertising pillar, former layers of the wall of remembrance are still visible, photos and comments overwrite one another while constantly forming new narratives, witnessing the different generations and groups performing memory as cultural memory. The stories formed by the notes almost overwrite the photographs themselves, which come to function as source material or catalysts for the ongoing dialogue formed by the various scribbles and scratches. We no longer know when or why a particular comment has been added: its initial motivation could have been another comment, a photo, the church itself, or a particular event. As traces they are nevertheless incorporated in new stories over and over by their readers and the souvenirs they produce, such as tourist photographs. The inclusiveness of the walls convinces visitors that they are part of this memory work. It is especially the welcoming gesture of the gaps between the comments and the associations between the photographs on the walls and the comments that enable creative appropriations of memories and motivate participation in practices of cultural remembrance: the continuous addition of notes, tags, photos and remarks displays the nature of cultural memory as an ongoing conversation.

### **Mediators of memory: 'The Story of Soweto' as actor-network**

So what do we make of the complex temporalities and interactions generated by the different materials of the Sowetan memory assemblage, and their shifting importance

over time? I propose that Bruno Latour's actor-network theory helps us grasp the character of memory work at play: the walls, comments, and photographs of the space become mediators in the sense that Latour discusses in his *Reassembling the Social*. Latour differentiates between an intermediary that simply 'transports meaning or force without transformation', and mediators that 'transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry' (39). A mediator accordingly allows for a network of relations between different objects, forms, and actions – the exhibited photograph relates to comments on the walls, and again, to the photographs that are being taken of these walls; as mediators, they are on the move and set other elements on the move. As mediators, memory objects translate the past in and for the present, they transform the figuration of a memory, and they productively distort older discourses – without simply replacing them – to motivate active cultural remembrance.

We can understand the 'stuff' of memory – a photograph in an exhibition, a memorial stone, a memory of a trip, a note on a wall, or other kinds of souvenirs – as both an actor, 'something that acts', and an actant, something 'to which activity is granted by others' (Latour, "On Actor-Network Theory" 5). According to Latour, 'any thing that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor – or, if it has no figuration yet, an actant' (*Reassembling* 71). In the case of Soweto's church, the exhibition walls are actors granting activity to the visitors; the notes left by previous visitors are at the same time actors granting activity to the present visitor who in turn adds a note herself, and who becomes an actor when sharing a photograph online; this photograph becomes an actor in its own right, granting further activity to the notes and exhibited photographs.

Latour offers the following definition of an actor: 'An actor in the hyphenated expression of actor-network is not the source of an action but the moving target of a vast array of entities swarming toward it' (*Reassembling* 46). In any memory assemblage, we are confronted with a vast array of swarming entities and changing positions rearranging themselves in response to new impulses and thereby themselves transforming the array: from the comments on the wall to the different visions that the tourist photographs offer. Looking at the agency of memory objects from the perspective of actor-network theory offers an important means of recognizing the vast range of actors in memory work: from material to atmosphere, place, time, and human

organization, all actors participate in making memory cultural. Memory work in Soweto's Regina Mundi Church follows the associations and relations made between the different objects and people present and their remediations of memory over time.

Following Latour, we might understand 'The Story of Soweto' as an actor-network supported by and giving way to a range of mundane appropriations of memorialization, which are potential actors in the work of cultural memory. The actor-network acknowledges 'how many participants are gathered in a thing to make it exist and to maintain its existence' (Latour, "Why Has Critique" 246). The same is true for the dynamic work of memory that is dependent on the acts and scenes of remembering and forgetting; memories depend on inscription, investment, and mediation. In the cultural acts of memory gathered around the Regina Mundi Church, we can follow the complicities and agencies of the stuff of memory and the different actors it draws toward it. Crucially, cultural acts of memory are not limited to human actions, nor is human remembering simply complemented by objects or props; indeed, the latter work beyond, besides, and through human interventions. In this way, actor-network theory underlines the importance of the mobility and movement inherent in cultural forms – both material and immaterial, how they invite appropriation and imagination and lead to mediation. Visitors' photographs of the scribbled walls are momentary snaps of a memory site in transformation, unrepeatable mundane archival records inviting a range of readings and findings beyond its author's or site's intended message.

In heritage tourism, reminders of the past are usually conceptualized and thought of as intermediaries (in Latour's sense), as static memorials transporting a story, a memory, or a part of history with little or no scope for transformation. By contrast, I argue for the incremental and assembled character of memory in which staged memory objects, appropriated in multifarious ways, act as mediators. They transform the memory of Soweto as a place for the anti-apartheid struggle by creatively altering the accounts that give meaning to this memory through a range of media that articulate and connect the memory actors in further networks. Thus, ANT offers a tool to trace the work and agency of memory beyond spatiality, materiality, or temporality only. For the study of complex memory assemblages, memory studies can therefore profit from the sensitizing concepts of actor-network theory.

If an archival photograph's actor-network and, within that network, the tourist's inscriptions – a scribble on a wall, a snapshot, an entry in a guestbook, a memorable experience told in a weblog – 'leave a trace', they can become 'matters of concern', about which Latour writes: 'while uncertain and loudly disputed, these real, objective, atypical and, above all, interesting agencies are taken not exactly as object but rather as *gatherings*' (*Reassembling* 114). In a reading of *Reassembling The Social*, Robert Oppenheim rightly points out that matters of concern are *interesting agencies* in Michel Callon's sense of *intéressement*, a process of enrolling and making others act, in the sense that they 'draw actors into complicities with the world and one another' (475). It is especially the work of the material objects in the exhibition and their digital mediations that draw human actors and places into complicities. This is how a memory of, for example, the anti-apartheid struggle, coupled with a memory of a trip to South Africa, gathers sights and sites, people and traces, stories and experiences. The exhibition walls at Regina Mundi Church are the core performers in this network, motivating and gathering appropriations by visitors who in turn change the wall and the exhibition's appearance and co-create its visuality – and visibility – in different mnemonic communities.

### **(Re)Mindmaps: Encountering 'talking walls'**

With these reflections on the nature of memory actors in mind, we can think of memory objects – like the tourist photograph – as mediators rather than intermediaries. This does not simply mean that we move beyond reading a photograph or note as a representation or an authorial gesture, but also that we take its agency seriously, a concern that has been highlighted, among others, by Karen Barad or Jane Bennett. In the eyes of their viewers, the 'talking walls' at the exhibition form more or less coherent narratives that make room for a variety of voices and viewpoints, experiences and thoughts. It is these that actively keep the conversation going. The visitors' photographs capture and transport more than the photographer noticed or intended to photograph, which is important for the later functions of the image as memory, for its durability, and for the network it participates in. This participation happens on a material level, but also on the level of meaning and content: an actual debate is taking place between individual comments through their arrangement on the walls and their appropriation in tourists' (and others') snapshots, which in turn make

these comments actors in the Latourian sense. I will illustrate this transmedial dynamic by zooming in on a detail of the wall photographed by another tourist (see fig. 14). The photographer has probably zoomed in on a message spread over the whole image reading ‘You are in our hearts we send you love & trust that peace is yours. Keep brave. With our love Frank & Annie Australia 23/06/01’, yet this inscription is framed by a series of other comments.

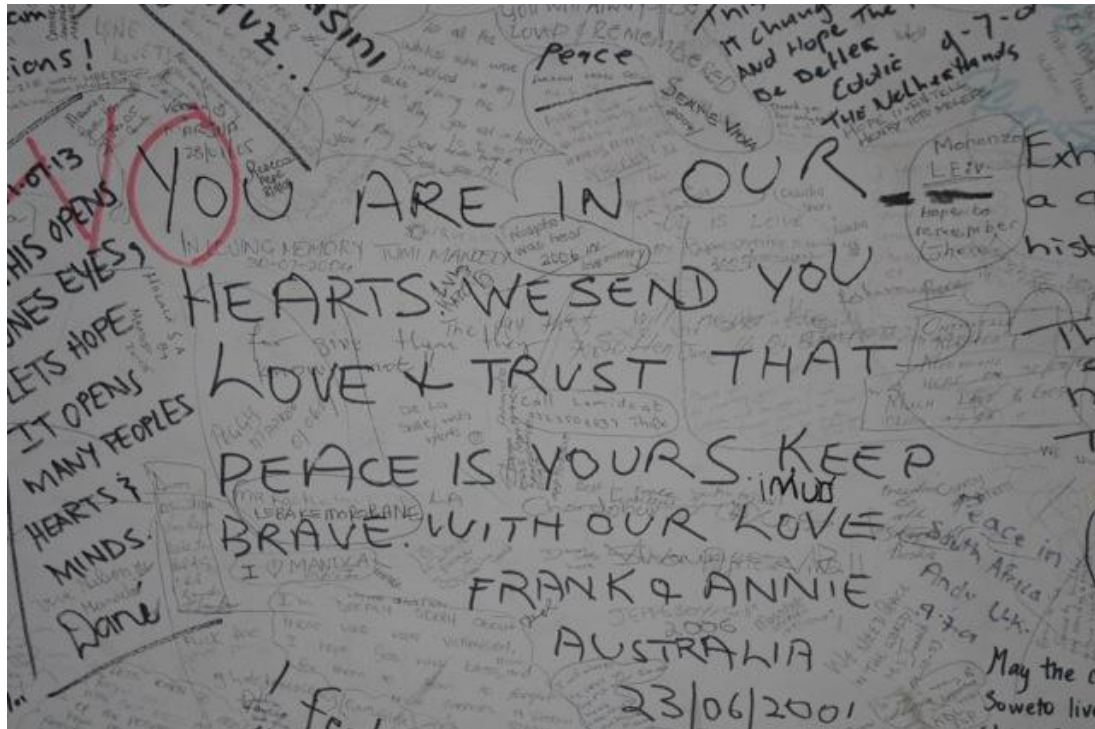


Fig. 14. Patrick Delahanty: ‘You are in Our Hearts’. Regina Mundi Church. 17 June 2010. Flickr.

In between the lines of this message we read a range of undated critical notes on South Africa’s past and current ways of coming to terms with the past. One unsigned statement articulates a critique that is only rarely heard in public: ‘To all the Whites who were involved in any acts during the struggle may you rot in hell and may God never forgive. Bless you!’ A little further down someone has written ‘forgive them they know not’; next to that we read ‘The day that will never be forgotten June 16’; further down it says in small letters ‘I’m deeply sorry about those who were victimized, I hope God will bless them and for them to learn to forgive their enemies’ (written in a bubble by one N. Vilakazi); next to that, we find a note that is almost indecipherable, but that very likely reads ‘Fuck the white people’ and something almost illegible ostensibly about democracy. In the top of the picture one Toto Molefe





The quotes link very different places and connect people who share the memory of a struggle and the memory of atrocities in the near past (or present) or the burden and chance of unfinished histories. There are also quite a few transnational calls for solidarity, as when someone writes ‘Unite against Apartheid – even in Palestine’ or ‘We need a Nelson Mandela in Venezuela’.

Next to one of Jürgen Schadeberg’s Sophiatown chronicles from 1955, showing three men playing nine men’s morris in front of a wall tagged ‘WE WON’T MOVE’, just a few days before the black population of what was then Sophiatown was forcefully removed and resettled in the suburb Meadowlands that would become part of Soweto, someone comments with an arrow pointing at the photo ‘same for us in Lebanon’ in 2009. Is this author referring to the fact that people in Lebanon face ongoing displacements or is he or she identifying with the call for resistance in the image? Did the photographer see this connection and what did she make of it? What makes these transnational connections meaningful is not only the fact that comments such as this are there, interacting with the images, but also the fact that they draw actors into complicities, motivating other comments and building the focus of further photographs, while finding new audiences beyond the exhibition space. Thus, the actor-network that Schadeberg’s photograph is involved in, and the acts it continuously draws toward it, are mediated and thereby maintained by the travelling tourist snapshots in figures 13, 14, and 15, but the snaps also indicate other motions catalyzed by the exhibition setup.

### **Moving sights**

The changing constellation of the photos and comments leads to rather unusual physical movements asked of the gallery visitors. One can observe their constant zooming in and out, moving closer and back again, not only to decipher the name of the photographer (written on signs next to the images) but first and foremost to be able to decipher the various comments. One has to kneel down or tiptoe at times to follow the scribbles. What at first sight appears like an amateurish gallery space suddenly evolves into an engaging and moving topography, motivating visitors’ involvement and physically moving people’s sight.

The photographic displays are on the move as well: not only when appropriated in visitors’ snaps and figuratively travelling over continents through the World Wide

Web, but also physically when falling off the wall, thereby changing the whole mise-en-scène. The most widely distributed image of the exhibition setup shows a photograph frame that has fallen off the wall, namely Schadeberg's portrait of Nelson Mandela looking out of his cell in Robben Island standing on the ground. Judging from found images of the exhibition online this frame has fallen off at least twice, and twice this has been read as a metaphorical comment upon the exhibition image and its content. One Flickr user captures the Mandela photo next to a photograph of Walter Sisulu and his wife in a café – both frames standing on the ground – naming the photo 'Fallen Heroes (Mandela & Sisulu à terre) [Mandela & Sisulu on the ground]'.



Fig. 16. Jean Liou: 'Fallen Heroes – Mandela & Sisulu à terre'. 21 July 2012. Flickr.

As the heroes referred to in this title are freedom fighters, and later politicians, Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, the attribute 'fallen' makes an ambiguous remark about,

firstly, that both are no longer ‘fighting’, and secondly, the visible fact that the frames that ‘hold’ their images have fallen off the wall. It is also making a conscious or unconscious reference to a comment by one Pakiso right above the frame that reads ‘To da Fallen heroes we salute you’. This comment might have been there before the frames fell off, earnestly saluting the student heroes who left their lives in the Soweto uprising of 1976 commemorated in many of the photographs. But it might just as well be directed at the unusual setup of the frames, and the fact that the people in the photos, Mandela and Sisulu, ‘fell’ with their frames and left the hero gallery for a while, at the same time pointing toward the fact that the times of the old freedom fighters are over. The visitor’s photograph thus captures and thereby actively creates an association between otherwise separated actors in the exhibition: the content of the exhibited image – the nation’s idols, Mandela and Sisulu – interacts with the changing circumstances of the medium – the glass frame – by which it is carried, and with the comment above the frame, broadening the actor-network around the memory visualized in Schadeberg’s photo, as it moves the photographer who had to kneel down to take this snapshot.



Fig. 17. Dai Kurokawa: ‘Former South African President Nelson Mandela in hospital’. 23 June 2013.

A similar detail was photographed later by Dai Kurokawa for EPA (the European Press Photo Agency, see fig. 17) and was reproduced over and over in July 2013 when it was used in more than 50 online newspaper articles throughout the world reporting on the former president of South Africa's hospital stay and lung infection.<sup>72</sup>

Remediated in this context, Pakiso's comment from 2012 seems even more relevant as the frame with Mandela's image is wrapped in plastic foil, 'bandaging' the former president at a time when millions feared for his health.

With different captions in different media, the very same image (fig. 17) is used to make a reference to the critical age and condition of the former president. Dug out of the online archives for international obituaries when Mandela eventually died in December 2013, it again adopts a whole new meaning. The fallen frame with the photograph symbolizes the transitoriness of both the one who is *in* the photo and that which *is* the photo – an archival record. The appropriations in the form of the accompanying comments, and the visitors' photos in which it features, reveal the transformative potential of the image. What I wish to highlight here is the actual *physical* agency of the actors featured in the snapshot – Schadeberg's photograph, its frame, Mandela (its object), the photographer – and how they interact in the assemblage the snapshot displays to, as Latour writes, 'transform, translate, distort, and modify' cultural memory.

### **Conclusion: Tracing situated memory work**

In the case of 'The Story of Soweto', following cultural formations as they evolve in situated practices in a specific site, and moving from this site to other places, can lead to an understanding of the dynamics of memory work in situ. An understanding that does not postulate the prior impact of structures of difficult heritages and unequal power relations between, for instance, visitors and guides, tourists and locals, or exhibited images and tourist snaps, but rather recognizes the unfinished histories and imaginaries that meet in this space as non-determining, potentially but not necessarily mediated in present relations and associations. It is surely very different actors whose comments meet in this post-apartheid encounter. People make references to all sorts

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<sup>72</sup> See, for example, Viggo Mortensen's article in the online edition of Danish newspaper *Kristeligt Dagblad* on 25 June 2013. The caption under the photo reads (my translation): 'On Sunday at Regina Mundi church in Soweto one could see this image of former president Nelson Mandela standing against the wall. There's a handwritten comment on the wall behind saying "Thanks for giving us freedom"'.

of individual experiences and ordinary needs they are reminded of or want to share with others. The main purpose of this essay is not to judge the meaning of these articulations and their authors' positions and intentions, but to trace and reflect how they interact with the other elements present in the encounter and present in the images; how they and their acts transform the whole memory assemblage as an actor-network connecting a range of different people and ideas.

The interplay of photographic image and text or scribbled image creates a dynamic mnemonic space that prevents a fixation in any visible figuration. As the scribbled text creates more space for the memory of the photograph, the photograph draws visitors' attention toward the notes assembled around it. The physical and symbolic movement that both the notes and the images afford enhances the creative work of memory transported and transformed in visitors' mediations. Latour's actor-network theory offers us a tool to recognize all these motions and interactions: what is on the move, swarming and gathering in Soweto's Regina Mundi Church, is more than just a nation's designed tourist memoryscape and a human actor's consumption of it. Within this actor-network setup, tourists' appropriations and especially snapshots actualize what a mediated memory has to say in the present. The next chapter turns to the beach as scene of interaction with and appropriation of memories. It departs from the retrospective sighting of World War II bunkers as 'oversights' in holiday snapshots.



## 4. Concrete Memories: The In/Visibility of Bunker Ruins

### Abstract

The essay traces the presence of *Atlantikwall* bunkers in amateur holiday snapshots and discusses the ambiguous role of the bunker site in visual cultural memory. Departing from my family's private photo collection from twenty years of vacationing at the Danish West coast, the different mundane and poetic appropriations and inscriptions of the bunker site are depicted. Ranging between overlooked side presences and an overwhelming visibility, the concrete remains of fascist war architecture are involved in and motivate different sensuous experiences and mnemonic appropriations by tourists. The essay meets the bunkers' changing visuality and the cultural topography they both actively transform and are being transformed by through juxtaposing different acts and objects of memory over time and in different visual articulations.

[T]heir meanings may become hollowed out but may still retain a presence as enigmatic signifiers. (...) Or they may find new uses in other networks. Or they may linger on as denaturalized reminders of past events and practices, purposely memorialized in various ways or simply present as ruins, as melancholy rem(a)inders. In other words, things can have a potent afterlife  
(Nigel Thrift 9)

### Introduction: Shifting visibilities

During the Second World War over 5000 bunkers were built as part of the Hitlerian Atlantikwall project along more than 2600km of European coastline. The sheer endless lines of concrete along the coasts make the beaches, visited by thousands of tourists each year, a complex site of memory where different past times are entangled and different memories and memorial appropriations of the bunker ruins meet (Haakonsen, "Experiencing German Bunkers in Denmark"). Overseen – and often overlooked – by institutionalized heritage bodies as 'bothersome leftovers of history' (Kimpel, "Übersehenswürdigkeiten" 296), the remainders and reminders of fascist power resist the very act of destruction. Only time, weather and beach strollers slowly alter the persisting presence of the concrete sites – not least by weaving them into their holiday photographs and stories.

Paul Virilio's famous quest to map the archaeology of 'the grey forms' in *Bunker Archaeologies* still has a major impact on the bunker discourse in academic

and artistic practices, situating the bunker site in visual cultural memory. It is photographic documentary, philosophical text, visual travelogue and nostalgic memoir at once; an account of an architect struck by the bunkers' monstrous presence and at the same time resigned invisibility. Virilio tried to understand the haunting melancholic powers and sensuous qualities of 'military space' embodied by the Atlantikwall by depicting its reference to sepulchre-cultural Greek and Egyptian architecture. The philosopher himself departed from a characteristic vacation outlook, namely the 'precious experience' of crossing the dunes and discovering the sea (Virilio, *Bunker Archaeologies* 9). He laid the foundation for later research into the experiential value of the bunkers (see Haakonsen for the case of Denmark) co-producing a visually dis/engaging topography. Virilio's self-reflexive, and partly self-ethnographic visual practice inspired most artists working with the bunker theme, pointing towards artistic strategies of self-inclusion and visualization of the threshold between absence and presence.<sup>73</sup>

While critical, often photographic, artistic reflections on the bunkers increased over the years, their long-standing 'silent' presence in domestic and tourist photography, another visual medium we relate to the work of memory, is ever so remarkable. It is here where this essay takes up Virilio's quest of how we can and already have empathized with the bunkers, and, furthermore, how the ruins as more or less silent actants have constantly interacted with their surroundings.<sup>74</sup> By tracing and juxtaposing the bunkers with a family's photographic holiday records and personal memories, their lasting presence and transformations over the years are made visible in this essay. Even though in holiday-marked space, the bunkers might not always be perceived 'as what they are' (Kimpel, "Übersehenswürdigkeiten" 300) – Second World War fascist war architecture aimed at total destruction – they attract and affect human and nonhuman actors in their surrounding, and motivate appropriation and sensuous perception in various ways. Both in the event of the actual encounter in

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<sup>73</sup> See Kimpel, "Übersehenswürdigkeiten" 299. Harald Kimpel's exhibition *Innere Sicherheit – Bunker-Ästhetik* (Marburger Kunstverein, October 2006) gives an important overview of artistic works with the bunker form in architecture and space, featuring for example Erasmus Schröter's dramatic light installations and Magdalena Jetelová's light writings and projections, both presented as photographic projects.

<sup>74</sup> Virilio in later writings on architectural interfaces ("Improbable Architecture" in *Lost Dimension*) further developed ideas on empathy and vision, introducing an 'endotic mode of seeing' which is based on his attempt to identify an in-between condition in which one sees simultaneously from without and within (see also Jill Bennett 85). This 'endotic vision' can lead to a questioning of the habitual, to a change in the perception of that which seems to be 'just there'.



time, and retrospectively, through looking at the photograph and assorting or mapping photographic memories in a sociable environment like the family, the bunkers themselves are feeding into the continuous emergence of the past's visibility in the present.

Following Harald Kimpel, the visibility of the bunker ranges between an *oversight*, a 'site worth overlooking'<sup>75</sup> on the one hand, and its immense visual manifestation on the other hand – hardly overlookable for its monstrous presence. By making the seemingly uninvolved presence of the bunkers visible in domestic photography, the photographs inspire new ways to imagine and picture the difficult heritage of the war relics in the present. Encountering the sight of the bunkers in private photography offers new ways of looking at *memoryscapes*, the visual topography of cultural memory in which remainders of the past are organized relationally. At the same time, it gives us access to the shifting organization of mnemonic visibility itself. Creating presences of diverse media and matter of memory – the researcher's act of transforming things into presences (Lefebvre 23) – triggers various reactions, as for example the sudden notice of the habitual on vacation, the overwhelming presence and questioning of that which has seemingly always been there, realizing the own misrecognition of and, alongside, one's visibility for the bunkers. The tourists' mundane appropriations of the bunker's visibility as encountered in the photographs point towards productive transformations of a transvisual memorial culture, the entanglement of past and present practices of re-visiting personal memories and the memory of others.

The essay centres on the individual's inventive appropriation of (over)sights of negative or difficult heritage as a productive, that is, creative, force in any shared memory discourse. It follows the various unintended and intentional appearances of the 'grey forms' in family vacation memories, and how they feed into a cultural memory of both bunker site and tourist space. Cultural memory is here understood as the symbolic and mediated forms over which memory is performed, that is, visual and textual re-meditations and (ritual) appropriations of the bunker sight/site. Creating a seriality in their visual appearance through a focused selection from holiday albums

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<sup>75</sup> *Übersehenswürdigkeit*, literally: something worth overlooking, an alteration of the German word for tourist sight, *Sehenswürdigkeit*, 'something worth seeing'.

puts the bunker site into a narration and focuses on memory work as an act of making the shifting temporality, spatiality and materiality of mnemonic forms observable.

The continuing narrations that we find in the family photo collections make these ‘private archives’ increasingly interesting for thinking ways of individual memorialization adding to and intervening into forms of public memory.<sup>76</sup> Memory-work involves not only human encounters, but the vibrancy of material sites of memory.<sup>77</sup> ‘Vision happens alongside, or amongst, multisensual encounters’, argue David Crouch and Nina Lübbren (7). ‘Sensual encounters are engaged expressively rather than in isolation; vision is not made “alone”’. Like vision, (memorial) space is produced in social acts and sensuous encounters of human and nonhuman actors. The beaches with the bunkers are contact zones between past, present and future, between individual life stories and social histories, between objects of memory and individual, material and social imagination.<sup>78</sup> Private photo archives can therefore give interesting insights into how memorial space is co-produced and performed by human and nonhuman actors.

### **Remembering the difficult heritage of bunkers – co-creating bunker sights**

The small town of Blaavand, located at the most western point of Jutland on the Danish coast is a typical summerhouse area and attracts thousands of tourists every year, mostly German and Danish, especially families, who seek a relaxing and undisturbed vacation at the beach or in the heather-land. Next to summerhouses, this part of Jutland is also covered with bunkers from the Second World War, built as part of the Nazis’ Atlantikwall project between 1942 and 1944. Memory-wise it is what could be called an inexplicit memory site where more or less visible ruins, and the events that once led to their instalment, now constitute a site of ‘difficult heritage’, a term coined by Sharon Macdonald to describe ‘a past that is recognized as meaningful in the present but that is also contested and awkward for public reconciliation’ (*Difficult Heritage* 1). Bunkers, as Silke Wenk writes in *Erinnerungsorte aus Beton (Memory Sites Made from Concrete)*, can be understood as ‘non-intended’,

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<sup>76</sup> See for example Marianne Hirsch, *The Familial Gaze*; Okwui Enwezor, “Archive Fever”, and Arjun Appadurai “Archive and Aspiration” (16).

<sup>77</sup> See the important work of Bjørnar Olsen and Þóra Pétursdóttir on the life of ruins.

<sup>78</sup> Aleida Assmann (337) writes: ‘The magic being ascribed to the places of remembrance is explained by their state as a contact zone’.

‘unwanted’ memorials, ‘unwilling archives but nevertheless remaining memorials of guilt and survival’ (16ff, my translation). Following Mette Haakonsen in “Experiencing German Bunkers”, they are ‘architectural remains in situ continuing the remembrance of the Second World War’ (6). This remembrance is not embodied by the concrete sites alone but takes place first and foremost in relation to and in exchange with human and nonhuman appropriations of them, where their visibility plays an important role.

On Blaavand beach we can follow the making of new memorable experiences where others have made theirs, where the past has left visible and invisible relics, resonating in the present to remain or remind, re-valued in the tourists’ own memories commemorating more than ‘just’ the difficult heritage and guilt of the Second World War. What is established here is but a floating connection to a past induced through the relics, a connection that is constantly changing in form and function, as the bunkers disappear here and reappear there, peak and crack from the water, show up and vanish in the sand after nature’s law. Tourists, who semi-consciously, and at times unaware, of the history of the encountered place, move through, act in, use and embody that historical space, actively encounter and inscribe (memorial) places and their difficult heritage.

The bunkers primarily attract visually, the tourist soon catching sight of them on entering the beach, standing in line like silent guards or abandoned houses. Once approached, they attract touch, appearing at times threatening and monstrous, dating back to an earlier, unknown time that presents itself as still tangible and needs to be felt and experienced. Tourists in Blaavand enter the ‘emotional experiential landscape’ of the beach (Kimpel, “Innere Sicherheit” 64) without being supervised and potentially guided by some kind of heritage tourism script focused on the bunkers’ commercial commemoration, and at the same time play in what was once ‘Hitlerian space’ (Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology* 57). The past is encountered in playful leisure, woven into the holiday situation. This playful moment on vacation is of importance for understanding the bunker site in cultural memory. Nigel Thrift introduces play as ‘a perpetual human activity with immense affective significance’, taking ‘the energy of sense-catching forms of things seriously’ (7). The playful moment in most vacationing brings forth the creative dynamics of embodied memory making, not least

in capturing the bunker sight conscious or unconsciously in snapshots. It furthermore supports the fact that the bunker's visuality is becoming multisensual.

### **The bunker in photographic memory**

Family photos, though first and foremost recording and remembering a family holiday, intimate relationships, happy moments and the daily business of a shared time away from home, also actively remember the bunkers in various ways.



Fig. 19. 'Building sand castles'. Scanned analogue colour photograph. 1984.

The photograph, writes Marita Sturken in "The Image as Memorial" (178),

...is not inhabited by memory so much as it produces it; it is a mechanism through which the past can be constructed and situated within the present. Images have the capacity to create, interfere with, and trouble the memories we hold as individuals and as a culture.

The family photographs at sites of the Atlantikwall point towards specific patterns of transforming and inscribing the bunker space, put on stage or being left aside, overgrown or even overlooked. The same appropriations can be found in visual art – where artists often play with the bunkers' visibility/invisibility immediacy. The visuality of the bunker site and that of the family are entangled in complex ways. The

cultural significance of family photographs lies, as Annette Kuhn (284-5) writes, in their double function as

...repositories of memory and as occasions for performances of memory. (...) As commonplace material artefacts, family photographs and albums contain meanings, and also seem infinitely capable of generating new ones at the point at which photography and memory work meet.

A third function is added by the visual presence of the bunker site in the picture, namely the event of the photograph as an occasion for the performance of a memorial sight within an image. This traversing visibility evolves through the 'memory work' that is done within this essay, looking back at a series of family vacation pictures from 1984-2007.



Fig. 20. 'Portrait'. Scanned analogue colour photograph. 1984.

The first photographic reference to the bunkers (fig. 19) dates back to 1984, showing a girl and a man building a sand fortification on a more or less deserted beach. It's a sunny day and in the back we see a woman approaching with a second camera. We also recognize two concrete bunkers building a diagonal line with the woman approaching the scene in the foreground. It seems as if she is coming out of or from one of the bunkers that have maybe offered a shady place for the camera and other belongings. The photo displays a typical family beach scene, recording the joys of sun, sea, sand, and spending time together. The bunkers here are integrated into the scene, both as part of the landscape and as part of the family scene.

The second picture (fig. 20), from the same summer holiday in 1984, shows a portrait of a young man. What is eye catching on first glance is his regard, staring at the sea or a beach scene. On second glance, we discover that he is leaning against a bunker, which makes the concrete in the re-vision suddenly visible itself, displaying marks from older graffiti and spots of rusty steel. It is a typical everyday snapshot portrait, the bunker herein providing the stable and plain background. Most likely, the portrayed himself – his attention visibly caught by something else in the moment the photograph was taken – only realized at a second glance (or touch) against what kind of material he was actually leaning, recalling Virilio's sudden notice of the bunker leading to the change in his perception of them.<sup>79</sup>

The wide beaches of Blaavand – especially back in the 1980s and '90s – have never really been crowded, so that the bunkers' built orientation marks and provides 'venues' for the tourists who prefer to settle around or near one of the ruins, evoking again their once protective function. As shady places and windbreakers, they have been popular, at times hard-fought, beach spots, when the sea and the sand had not yet let them sink or disappear. In some cases, their attraction was exactly the result of their sinking. These more mundane uses of the bunkers are displayed in photographs that show people sunbathing against or on top of them. It is through practices like this that an actual physical connection to the bunkers – not as bunkers, but as material form, as concrete beaches or sun decks – is established and furthermore 'caught' in

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<sup>79</sup> Virilio writes in *Bunker Archaeology* (10-11): 'It all started – it was a discovery in the archaeological sense of the term – along the beach south of Saint-Guérolé during the summer of 1958. I was leaning against a solid mass of concrete, which I had previously used as a cabana; (...) There were not many people around, and scanning the horizon like that, with nothing interrupting my gaze, brought me full round to my own vantage point, to the heat and to this massive lean-to buttressing my body: this solid inclined mass of concrete, this worthless object, which up to then had managed to martial my interest only as a vestige of the Second World War, only as an illustration for a story, the story of total war'.

the image. In figure 21 we see my sister positively utilising the drift of the concrete for a full experience of sunbathing.



Fig. 21. ‘Sunbathing’. Scanned analogue colour photograph. July 1992.

The fading graffiti of a dove on light blue ground makes her symbolically ‘lean against war and peace’, pointing towards the transformation and revaluation of the war architecture and the overlapping meanings it collected over the years. What begins to show here is the bunkers’ capacity to ‘invite participatory interaction’<sup>80</sup> of various kinds: the tourist, attracted by its practical shape, monstrosity, or, less so, historical aura, is invited to play in and with the space the bunkers create. These practices of encountering and using the bunker are often accompanied by the urge of taking something away from the site – like a photographic memory or a piece of stone and sand – and at the same time leaving something there at the bunker site, diverse forms of personal inscriptions – from the graffiti above to sweat, climbing ropes, urine or clothes. The holiday experience further transforms the bunkers and, through visual memory, incorporates them into private archives and narrations. The site of the bunker, not being restricted like a proper monument or tourist sight, but rather an

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<sup>80</sup> See Sturken, “The Image as Memorial” (180).

*oversight* in the abovementioned sense, figures as a dynamic memorial, open to appropriations, a constantly changing visual figuration.

### **Experiencing sociality: Re/staging the family and the bunker**

Hunting the bunkers further in our family albums showed that they generally make a prominent stage for family photography and what Marianne Hirsch called the ‘familial gaze’, reaffirming and displaying sociality and family ties.<sup>81</sup> The image below (fig. 22) shows a young girl (the author) sitting on one of the bigger bunkers up in the dunes. The scene displays, among other things, the bunkers in their function as climbing rocks. Here, the initial function of the concrete war architecture, espying the arrival of an enemy, is repeated in the tourist gaze, taking in and appropriating for itself the landscape underneath, as done by the family in the upper left part of the picture, looking down at the sea and the beach, and most likely being photographed at the same time from the other side.



Fig. 22. ‘Posing on the bunker’. Scanned analogue colour photograph. 1993.

At the bottom of the photograph, graffiti again inscribes itself as another memorable practice upon the bunker and the photographic image – an intended inscription into

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<sup>81</sup> See also Larsen, “Families Seen Sightseeing”.



future meanings and perceptions of the bunkers' cultural history: Often in the 1980s, the bunkers were tagged with activist (often pedagogic) slogans. Here the graffiti reads (in German) 'BERUFSVERBR-', probably 'professional criminal', and underneath: 'WEG MIT D-' ('Away with th-'), reminding us again of the endeavour to destroy the bunkers. It is on the other hand an act of warning to future generations, continuing the reminiscence of the atrocities of Nazi Germany, and showing tourists' (most likely Germans) awareness of the own difficult heritage that the bunker site embodies. This visible gesture of warning only remains because the bunkers cannot easily be destroyed and are thus 'forced' to continue the remembrance of Second World War atrocities.



Fig. 23. 'Family Triptych'. Scanned analogue colour photographs. July 1990.

The course of time itself, the transformation and revaluation of places through natural and human intervention is made visible in the picture. Just like the bunkers themselves, the graffiti are slowly eaten by time, overgrown with grass, washed away by rain and sea: more natural ways and rhythms of visualizing acts of forgetting and the dynamics of memory. The 'familial gaze' in these pictures corresponds to Jonas Larsen's thoughts on tourist photography as 'more embodied, less concerned with "consuming" places than with producing social relationships, such as family life' (416). The 'nature' of tourist photography, he goes on, 'is a complex "theatrical" one of corporeal, expressive actors; scripts and choreographies'. Family holiday photographs stage, display, capture and thereby memorize familiness through various means: Group photos (as in fig. 23, nicely featuring the shade of my father as photographer himself at bottom left) display social cohesion in the family, underlining the shared, joyful experience of the holiday, offering the possibility of collective, social remembrance at later points in the future. This triptych, for example, has been standing in many relatives' living rooms, moving houses and cities over time, and

being seen by a range of visitors, the bunker site always travelling with the image itself. Above, particularly, as well as in the following figures, the bunkers are present as silent guards in the back, or indicated by shadows in the lower foreground of the picture.



Fig. 24. 'Sister Triptych'. Scanned analogue colour photographs. 2002.

Figure 24 is a series of semi-staged snapshots, starring the sisters from figure 21 twelve years later. At first glance, the social bonds of sisterhood and the familiarity enacted for the camera are striking, confirming an intimate relation between the photographer and the photographed. The familial holiday gaze also culminates in the acts of funny posing and the serial character of the photographs. Compared to the series in figure 23, the 'cultural work' (Hirsch xv) these photographs perform becomes obvious: family photography not only records the transformation of the bunkers and the change in imaging technologies, but also bears witness to the growth of the children and the transformation of families in general. Flicking through family albums and especially family scenes also shows that a number of pictures are taken of the same scene, creating 'a series of intimacy' (see also fig. 23). Bærenholdt et al. (98-99) note that photographs, which enact a family gaze, are often taken with little regard for the site or landscape in which the participants are situated. I argue that the bunkers' presence in retrospective is neither irrelevant nor unnoticed. On the contrary, the concentrated, repeated and serial presence of the bunkers as background becomes a social mnemonic fact itself in the act of creative display and remediation (in frames on living room walls, as desktop background, etc.) in the transvisual realm of the

family. It underlines the very fact that difficult histories are poetically entangled in presents and futures, and that remembrance is continued in habitual individual acts, transcending visual mnemonic forms.



Fig. 25. 'Monkey bunker'. Scanned analogue colour photograph. 2002.

The concrete formations in the back of figure 24 also make a reference to art and popular culture, starring one of the most photographed bunkers along the Danish coast. Figure 25 shows this massive, slightly tilted bunker with the painting of a huge red 'Immendorff ape'<sup>82</sup> often set in scene with a round yellow sign displaying the emblem of a sniper along the poles indicating that the beach (the heather land and the dunes) from there on merge into a military training ground of the Royal Danish Army.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> 'The ape as artist' was Jörg Immendorff's contribution to the 1995 'Fredsskulptur – peace sculpture' art project along 500km of the Danish coast. 20 years later, in 2015, it has been repainted as reaction to the fading colours and (other) graffiti that partly overwrote it. An inventive 'no graffiti' prohibition sign was installed next to the ape indicating furthermore that this is a 'Kunstværk/ Kunstwerk / work of art' and should not be demolished by graffiti.

<sup>83</sup> Needless to say that the air force training, the air bombing tests and target practice on the ground lead to another ambiguous connotation of the area, as war is practiced where war actually took place, adding a sonorous experience to the multisensual encounter with the beach.

### **Sensing pasts – experiencing history**

Enhanced through the ambiguous landscape of former and contemporary warfare, the bunkers are encountered and visually appropriated both as *fascinosum* and ‘demanding monument’ (Sturken, “Image as Memorial” 180) in that their aesthetic or historical appeal as visible ruins *in situ* demands the presence of a photograph in future memory. It is these kinds of hunting-haunting photographs that often leave the frame of the familial gaze and enter a wider public as historical representations of Second World War sites. Looking at the personal physical connection to past worlds and events, Mette Haakonsen (“Experiencing German Bunkers” 7) ascribes to the bunkers an ‘intermediary role in commemoration’:

Direct, physical connection between disturbing remains and the actual sites of crimes, accidents or catastrophes, comply [*sic*] with a need to immerse with the past mentally and keep ‘in touch’ with the victims and history. With other words [*sic*], the architectural remains potentially facilitate ‘contact’ with the past and can have an intermediary role in commemoration.

The naturally sought contact with the ruins that remain and remind because they could not be destroyed and silenced is an important aspect of coming to terms with past events that one has not experienced or witnessed in person. This non-commoditized and sometimes non-conscious experience within vacationsapes, which only shows later as a fact in the image taken home, might even trigger more conscious reflections on the transformations of time and vanishing pasts than occupational *topolatry*, curtailing our awareness and imagination (Michel, “Die Magie des Ortes”). The body, encountering a site of historical significance, knowingly or unknowingly continues the commemoration of difficult heritages when placing it in a photographic scene and later performance of visual commemoration when the image starts travelling itself. There is a possibility – and potential – for an autonomous way of becoming conscious of these strange objects and questioning and befriending this strangeness.

The engaging topography of beach and bunkers<sup>84</sup> allows for a ‘sensual side of historical experience’ through the possibility of touching, smelling, tasting – and importantly seeing – ‘those worlds in the objects that constituted them’ as Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (419ff) writes. The sensuous embodied experience is central to individual memory as the body remembers encounters with the bunker, either visibly in the form

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<sup>84</sup> See also David Crouch on the notion of rhythmic engagement and tourists’ ‘flirting with space’, in “Meaning, Encounter and Performativity” 24ff.

of scratches and marks, activated by revisiting the place in question, or via looking at photographic memories. The sight of the bunker, the visual realm transported in the picture, is what potentially activates other sensual mnemonic reactions. What is appealing at the sight/site of the bunker is ‘not only their ruin-aesthetics but at the same time their secrecy and colossal form’ (Marszolek and Buggeln 16, my translation). This, according to Silke Wenk (20), motivates a treasure hunting for the lost authenticity of past times. Such notions of haunting histories meet acts of hunting in the liminal beach site of the bunkers, including the hunting for photogenic motives. The conscious, at times nostalgic, fascination for the bunkers culminates in a somewhat curious aesthetic experience, expressed in documenting, that is photographing or filming, the bunkers as ‘attractive ruins’.

### **Ruins’ attraction and the photogenic gaze**

Once they were conquerable and appeared less threatening due to obvious marks of deterioration, the bunkers were increasingly appropriated and ‘trusted’. Enhanced even more by artistic interventions like Bill Woodrow’s *Bunker Mule* (1995), some were transformed into proper, recognizable (tourist) sights, offering a stage to the visitor, as in the following image displaying a teenager (me) posing on top of the newly arranged ‘bunker mule’.<sup>85</sup> Following Kimpel, it is artistic interventions that impose on the bunkers their status as memorials through documentary, dramatizing or transforming acts (“Übersehenswürdigkeiten” 301ff).<sup>86</sup>

Having depicted similar acts in the family photographs above, I posit that these photographs, developing a life of their own, feed into a cultural, that is shared and culturally mediated, memory of Second World War sites, appropriate the concrete bunkers anew and trans-form history’s reach into the present in visuality. Their

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<sup>85</sup> Bill Woodrow’s *Bunker Mules* from 1995 were also part of the art project *Fredsskulptur*; he transformed four of the bunkers at Blaavand beach into mules, attaching steel heads and tails to the concrete, thereby capturing and enhancing both the bunkers’ urge to disappear, to ride into the sea, and their visibility as concrete reminders, which furthermore gave them a fixed place and image in photographic tourist memories. With names such as ‘concrete horses’, ‘sea stallion’, ‘bunker art’, ‘delighted horse’, ‘Trojan horse’, etc., the photographs of bunker mules in front of sunsets and sunrises gain up to 3500 views and likes on Flickr where they are invited to groups like ‘Beautiful Decay’ and ‘Forgotten’.

<sup>86</sup> In another project of *Fredsskulptur*, Magdalena Jetelová projected quotes from Virilio’s *Bunker Archaeology* on the bunker’s surface – for example the above cited ‘an empty ark or a little temple minus the cult’ on the ‘monkey bunker’ in fig. 7 seen from the other side – and thereby literally ‘inks them with the evils they incorporate’ (Marszolek and Buggeln 24).

presence and, naturally, change over time as displayed in a holiday chronology, can be perceived as articulating the very architecture of memory itself. I argue that both artistic transformations and the domestic holiday photograph appeal to the individual imagination, enabling it to picture the meeting of present pasts and present futures simply through manifesting and pointing towards the bunkers' liminal state of in/visibility.



Fig. 26. 'Discovering the bunker mule'. Scanned analogue colour photograph. 1996.

Remembering or making memories is an act of making relations in the present and in the presence of actants, in an active engagement of human, memory site or object and world. The photographs in their function as writing history 'passing by' do not only capture the event as family love, a relaxing moment in the sun or the successful climbing of a bunker dune. They relate these moments to both a memory of the family and venture into a mnemonic visuality of a shared past of wartime cruelties. The photographic event lives on in the transvisual realm created by the family holiday photograph, changing meanings and functions over time, but constantly feeding into the shifting visuality of the past.

**Conclusion: Holiday photographs co-create the visibility of the bunker**

Adolf Hitler's Atlantikwall paved the holiday beaches of Western Europe between France and Norway, confronting leisure travel and history in a challenging way for our understanding of the manifold relations between visibility and memory. Shared historical representations of the bunkers and the different times and memories they incorporate are articulated in the memory work done in this article and the juxtaposition of the photographic documents showing how 'memory operates as a type of cultural text' traversing visibility and family sociality (Radstone in Kuhn, "Photography and Cultural Memory" 284). The changing individual experiential character of the Blaavand beach bunkers as appropriated in a family's photo collection gives insight into the dynamic of memory work by extending its focus to mundane visual practices and articulations.



Fig. 27. 'Photographing the bunker mule'. Digital photograph. 2007.

The bunkers are themselves 'moved' in visibility by acts happening in between them. They live on in photographs, acquire new meanings and accordingly shift their visibility through being (re)appropriated. The interventions into the bunkers' visibility, not only professional artistic ones, but especially mundane holiday appropriations, co-

create the memorial space of the bunker in photographic documents. The integration of the concrete ruins into a tourist space of play, family experience, and sociality points towards future visions of remembering and forgetting pasts. The bunkers leave their status as an unwanted and indestructible disturbing presence, a ‘sight worth overseeing’, and engage in the visualization of diverse productive everyday appropriations and revaluations of the habitual.

Chapter 5 develops the notion of oversight introduced in this chapter into a conceptual framework. It juxtaposes the patternings of sites of memory introduced in Chapter 2 with tourist picturing practices at sites of memory, taking into account the sites’ entanglement of absence and visibility.



Ivan Vladislavić DOUBLE NEGATIVE

What awakes an  
image in a  
photographer?

Writing a text in  
response to photographs,  
with photographs that  
'already have become  
part of one's visual  
memory' (Vladislavić)

<< Sometimes photographs annihilate memory;  
they swallow the available light and cast  
everything around them in shadow. >>

Neville Lister in *Double Negative* 87

Absence and presence in  
the photograph: How do  
we 'remember in  
unrealized snapshots'?



QUESTION

What do the photographs  
'pass over in silence'  
(Steyn)?



Fig. 28. A. Ioppolo: At Hector Pieterse Memorial. 11 July 2012.

## 5. Oversights – Memory and the Overlooked in Holiday Snapshots

### Abstract

In an era of incessant self-portrayal, with photographs instantly shared on social media to solicit real-time reactions in the form of ‘likes’ (and ‘dislikes’), deleted scenes and overlooked or discarded images as well as images that don’t seem to fit in gain a new meaning. This chapter picks up on the notion of *oversight* and evolves the relationality of the visual, of absence and dynamic cultural memory via a typology of the tourist snapshot and visitors’ picturing practices at sites of memory. Drawing from Ariella Azoulay’s ‘event of photography’ and Joanna Zylińska’s ‘photomediations’ to understand the work of the snapshot today, the chapter discusses the phenomenon of oversight with regard to memory work as (i) a mnemonic *practice* of overlooking details in the event of photography, and (ii) a mnemonic *quality* of sites and images, which makes us ‘see more when nothing is seen’.

Like every photograph, the snapshot is an indexical trace of the presence of its subject, a trace that both confirms the reality of existence and remembers it, potentially surviving as a fragile talisman of that existence even after its subject has passed on.  
(Gregory Batchen 135)

Central to the work of cultural memory and the constitution of mnemonic topographies is the distribution of the visual. In previous chapters I have examined a range of ways in which tourist sights, visualizations of encounters with mediated memory, and the visual practices tied to them assemble in actor-networks. The last chapter indicated the issue of a shifting visibility within the memory work of the tourist snapshot, taking the example of Second World War bunkers on a Danish beach that appear in holiday snapshots. Drawing on examples from all the sites of memory I’ve revisited, in this chapter I present a comprehensive approach to the ways in which presence and absence as well as visibility and invisibility become entangled in cultural memory work and tourist picturing practices. Further elaborating the concept of *oversight*, I turn to the various forms these entanglements can take at the interface of the holiday snapshot and tourist sites of memory.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section attempts to define the snapshot and the place of vernacular photography in memory work by drawing from Ariella Azoulay’s notion of the *event of photography* and Joanna Zylińska’s notion of *photomediations*. This part also presents the theoretical framework for my

discussion of snapshots in other chapters. The second and main section relates tourist picturing practices to the concept of oversight, discussing four modes of oversight in relation to snapshots from Blaavand and Soweto. In the third section I attempt to anchor the different modes of oversight and their relevance for cultural memory work in an actor-network methodology.

In the relational context of the material and the transvisual (see the Introduction and Chapter 2) I focus on the ‘spatiovisual’, the organization of the visual in spatial practices,<sup>87</sup> to approach *oversight* with regard to memory work in two ways: firstly, as a mnemonic *practice* of overlooking details in the event of photography, things (in this case, actors of memory) which we do not see, that we overlook, either when taking the photograph or when looking at it later. Secondly, I investigate oversight as a mnemonic *quality* of sites and images, which makes us ‘see more when nothing is seen’ at the physical tourist sight to be photographed or in the picture itself. The latter aspect specifically concerns the productive and creative quality of absence and emptiness with regard to the attraction of an encountered site or image in order to sustain cultural remembrance. Absence can either refer to a real emptiness (no visible human infrastructure) or to a lack of what is anticipated and expected in holiday snapshots, when images stand out because they are different.

### **Example: Posing for the camera at Hector Pieterse Memorial**

I begin this chapter with a series of holiday snapshots. The framed photograph on the first page (fig. 28) was taken at the Hector Pieterse Memorial and Museum in Soweto. In the background, embedded in a type of statue, we recognize Sam Nzima’s iconic photograph of 16 June 1976 that shows Mbuyisa Makhubu carrying the dead body of 13-year-old Hector Pieterse who died in police gunfire during the Soweto Uprising. The snapshot of three people standing in front of the memorial (I’m in the middle) was taken as the winter sun was setting. Looking closer, we notice that the people pictured are looking at two different photographers. The photo was staged when A., a tourist I was accompanying in Soweto and I approached a group of five

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<sup>87</sup> Spatiovisuality expresses the entanglement of spatiality and visibility, inherent also in the concept of *tourist sight*; it describes the visual orientation at a certain location, the relationship of visible and invisible elements to each other as well as the intertwining of visible or invisible properties of sites of memory and memorials as they manifest in pictures. I found out later that the term was coined by film scholar Giuliana Bruno to describe the practices of viewing moving images at the intersection of cinema and architecture.

girls who were posing in front of and next to the memorial photograph-statue for their companions' cell phones. A. asked the smallest girl whether he can take her photo (fig. 29, IMG\_2286). While I snapped A. standing next to the photograph-statue, the girls asked if they could take a photo with me – which A. also recorded (fig. 28 above, and IMG\_2288 in fig. 29, below). We took three more group shots including one with A. (IMG 2291, snapped by a passer-by) before we all left the site, heading in different directions.

There are many issues that I could discuss here, starting with the use of a photograph as a memorial statue to the ways researchers become visually involved in their research. I was also recording most of what happened so the externalization of visual material becomes another endless *mise-en-abîme* (see Chapter 2). The setup of these snapshots is also somewhat atypical: It was 'locals' or 'tourists-for-an-afternoon' who asked the 'visitors-from-abroad' to pose for a photo with them. They too were visitors, not exactly 'local' Sowetans, but South Africans, who were closer to home than either A. or I. This shows the risk of labelling people 'local' or 'tourist' and associating certain behaviours and practices, such as taking photographs of the other, with only one group: it exposes the shiftiness of the label in principle.



Fig. 29. IMG\_2284-2291 (from left to right): Photographs taken at the Hector Pieterse Memorial, copied in chronological order from A.'s memory card. 11 July 2012. Soweto.

Now I would like to focus on yet another aspect: the in/visibility of the memorial site. In many ways, and for more than one reason, the memorial's features, the photo-as-

statue and the lettered walls, become invisible in these snapshots. This is largely because of the rear light: with the setting sun, the subjects and the camera angle had to switch position. At the same time, more and more people were gathering, so the act of posing in front of the memorial became an act of meeting others and posing together.

This series of snaps in figure 29 shows one of the more obvious instances of oversights, namely when memorials become secondary to other actors who receive more (photographic) attention. This happens to sites of built memorials like monuments and designated tourist sights in particular. But other entanglements of mediated memories and visibility are also exposed in the practice of tourist snapshots. Before turning to them, I will briefly define how I use ‘snapshot’.

### **The snapshot: ‘No-one is the sole signatory to the event of photography’**

The picture is not simply a translation of an ideology on to celluloid, nor is it simply an expression of a momentary experience. (...) It is not just picturing a landscape, nor representing places – it is seizing a moment in a place. It is communicating some point about experience in one particular place and time to an audience or viewer in another place and time.  
(Mike Crang 367)

I use the term snapshot to describe how, where and by whom a photograph is taken, without judging about its aesthetic or other qualities. A snapshot is a personal recording of a moment, taken spontaneously by an individual and a more or less automatic camera. Every photograph is a recording of a moment but they are not all called snapshots. Snapshots are linked to the vernacular, the everyday, the ordinary, the private, such as a family holiday. The term is often used derogatorily to distinguish snapshots from ‘proper photographs’.<sup>88</sup> What differentiates different kinds of photographic images is not primarily their function or purpose (whether a photograph was taken for the sake of taking, showing, exhibiting or selling) but the ways they have to communicate and how they are circulated: how they network. A photograph is never just an individual’s ‘visual perception materialized’, as Martha Langford (3) criticizes in her introduction to *Image & Imagination* and which Ariella

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<sup>88</sup> This has been pointed out and criticized for instance in Gregory Batchen’s important work, writing a non-normative history of photography. He argues for a ‘shift of analytical emphasis from the producers of photographs to their owners, offering the possibility of a history of the reception of photographs. Photography thereby becomes a dynamic mode of apprehension rather than a series of static pictures’ (127).

Azoulay (70) summarizes above: ‘No one is the sole signatory to the event of photography’. With regard to tourist picturing practices, Mike Crang adds (366): ‘We cannot look on the photo as simply recording the event when it is part of that event’s very nature’.

Compared with other photographic images, a snapshot is recorded more quickly: no one lies in wait for the perfect light or the perfect motif. However, I doubt that it is first and foremost a social ritual that results in boring and ubiquitous images without any attempt to look good or interesting. What distinguishes snapshots from professional or artistic photographs (not counting any financial value) is their potential and ability to ‘move’: to circulate and to sustain interest depending on the platforms where they are entered or given to display themselves and to connect and interact with other things and people, along with (to a lesser extent), the ‘intentionality of attention’ that they lack.<sup>89</sup> I think that people supported by technological props and photographic applications for smartphones care more and more about the quality and appearance of their snapshots, keeping in mind a public, and not just their personal use.

Next to the increasing number of such ‘professionalizing amateurs’, a certain ‘snapshot aesthetic’ has gained interest in the art world and beyond (see for instance Mette Sandbye’s *Kedelige Billeder*). Probably because it is now possible to make nearly every photograph a flawless image, the seemingly imperfect ‘visibly vernacular’ is sought. On a different level, Lomo and Polaroid, as well as older analogue photographic techniques and chemicals, are getting more attention in popular culture and are being imitated by apps that offer digital ‘retro filters’ for smartphone photography. This shows the transvisual entanglement of different photographies, their authors, practices, technologies, techniques, and pictures.

More photographic memories than ever, and more snapshots of photographs that are part of memorial sites, are being exteriorized to digital devices and online platforms. This does not necessarily make them more visible, indeed, Martin Lister (1) or Varney and Wamposzyc argue that the opposite might be the case. But it makes them potentially available and a part of the composition of a visual cultural memory. With regard to analogue vs. digital photographs (the latter of which is now the main

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<sup>89</sup> This is what Michael Ann Holly attributes to art in comparison to vernacular photographic practices (quoted in Frosh, “Rhetorics of the Overlooked” 172).

technology for making snapshots), I agree with Keightley and Pickering that ‘an abiding temptation in writing about new or recent developments in communications and cultural technologies is to exaggerate the degree of change involved’ (“Technologies of Memory” 577).<sup>90</sup> In her article on photography and thing theory, Julia Breitbach (38-40) sums up the debate about the distinction between the analogue and digital photographic image and concludes that when seen as a continuity in cultural practice, they do not differ that much. I find that although the low cost allows people to photograph much more and also more spontaneously, holiday photographs continue to be presented in special albums (both on- and offline), and are printed out, shared and edited more than the ‘everyday’ snapshots of the daily lunch or the morning bus stop sign that are said to have lost their meanings as pictures and memories.<sup>91</sup>

Despite many fascinating scholarly explanations that, as Lynn Berger (183) writes, ‘the practice and experience of everyday photography have become more important than the pictures themselves’, looking at snapshots still matters. Pictures taken during holidays for example are still revisited – searched for and looked at again – although not necessarily by the photographer or the photographed. Now they can become part of what Joanna Zylińska calls ‘photomediations’, a concept I address below. It seems that despite the shift from one-apparatus (analogue) photography to cell phone-camera/many devices (digital) photography that has caused the number of snapshots taken to morph, about the same number of images are revisited again and again.

When it comes to contemporary digital snapshot practices, three things matter: the sociality of the technologies, the increased public life of the image, and what we could call the ‘analogue look’. As the snapshot series at the beginning of this chapter shows, the many kinds of cameras and camera devices available (tablets, cell phones etc.) often lead to class-trip-like posing situations when different groups of people meet. It is often the devices that encourage sociality: people with cameras are more

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<sup>90</sup> Many others also point to the shortcomings of technological determinist arguments when it comes to digital photography, see for instance Gail Baylis, “REMIEDIATIONS”.

<sup>91</sup> José van Dijck, for instance, argues that through digital technologies and especially instant photography sharing, photographs ‘gain value as “moments” while losing value as mementoes’ (“Digital Photography” 62). Sarvas and Frohlich similarly suggest that ‘communication has surpassed memory as the primary function of photography’ (quoted in Keightley and Pickering, “Technologies of Memory” 579).



likely to be approached by others who are photographing. The increasingly public life of the digital photograph refers to its almost uncontrollable availability and movement online. After being snapped using a service connected to the Internet, or uploaded at the end of the day, private photographs now have their own lives. They become traceable for others and become involved with new publics. Finally, the specific ‘look’ of the analogue photograph – or what that is imagined to be, namely a black-and-white photograph with slightly blurred corners – is getting more and more attention. This is shown not only in the ‘retro-look’ apps but also in the popularity of black-and-white photographs exhibited in memorial sites such as the Regina Mundi Church as elaborated in Chapter 3,<sup>92</sup> and the photograph-statue in the snapshots discussed above. The photographer’s most pressing concern seems to be to get one’s *own* version of the monochrome photograph.

This chapter and thesis focus on snapshots, which are not taken to be commercially reproduced or to be sold on an art market, although that could well happen at some point. I am writing about photographs that are primarily taken privately, although not exclusively for personal use since most of them are shared online, where almost anyone with Internet can access them. Which adjective describes what is at stake here? Luc Pauwels talks about the social functions of ‘private’ photography (34f), Sarah Pink calls it ‘amateur’ photographic practice, Mike Crang investigates ‘popular’ photography, both van Dijck and Sturken speak about ‘personal’ photographs, while Keightley and Pickering (581) as well as Lynn Berger (2) write about ‘vernacular’ photographic practices, vernacular snapshot photography or ‘everyday’ photography – I called them ‘domestic’ photographs in Chapter 4. The private, the personal, the vernacular and the everyday all converge in tourist practice and tourist photography. I will use the term ‘vernacular’ because it transcends public and private realms, and sometimes employ ‘personal’ to indicate a snapshot’s individual author.

No matter which term we use, the snapshot remains overlooked by most photography studies. Researchers have investigated its ‘social’ function but neglect its aesthetic and formal qualities and ontology. At the same time, the socializing activities

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<sup>92</sup> Tourists visiting ‘The Story of Soweto’ often try to take a photograph that resembles the black and white photographs there – but without the passepartout, silver frame or scratched wall. As I discuss in Chapter 3, their representation of an old photographic image is never even nearly perfect: The stained-glass windows or even the photographer are reflected in the glass frames of the displayed photograph and are visible in the ‘copy’ as remediation.

of art photographs are rarely examined. Studies of photographs that look at all these aspects are clearly lacking.

### **Photomediations**

Joanna Zylynska also notices this bias in her fascinating project, *Photomediations: An Open Book*, an online text and image platform investigating current notions of photography (in 2015). She writes: ‘The plethora of activities in which photographs are involved as not just objects but also participants of events still tend to be subsumed under one of the two general rubrics: *photography as art* or *photography as social practice*’. I doubt that anyone would seriously question either the snapshot’s power to affect or art photography’s intention to ‘socialize’ and be part of people’s everyday life. I have therefore tried to address both shortcomings and bridge the gap between the ‘social snap’ and ‘art photography’ in my case studies by taking the ‘boring’ snapshot seriously as a photograph, including its aesthetic appeal, and by considering the sociality of exhibited ‘professional’ (journalistic and artistic) photographs. I, too, seek to connect both types of images by juxtaposing visual resemblances as well as when their uses or rituals overlap, and to identify where nodes meet and entangle in mediation, such as a snapshot of an exhibited photograph.

I refer to Zylynska’s conceptual project, *photomediations*, to rethink contemporary photography and connect research into art with vernacular photography ‘in order to capture the dynamism of the photographic medium today, as well as its kinship with other media – and also, with *us as media*’. Photomediations are attempts to trace new stories of photographs:

Rather than pursue the possibility of taking an original photo of a wedding or a unique selfie, we would be better off engaging in the creative activity of photography by trying to *arrange different routes* through the multi-layered landscape of photomediations.  
(italics added)

Latour resonates in Zylynska’s understanding of mediation. She emphasizes that the photograph is an effect of collective activity in which both human and nonhuman actors become mediators. The focus remains the image’s relationality, the connections it makes and traces it leaves, not its individual author and the intended ‘message’.

## The event of photography

Building on this notion and methodological hints, I have been considering Ariella Azoulay's understanding of the event of photography and the photograph as platform. Azoulay takes the image itself as an operating space, a space to intervene in, so that the encounter with a concrete photographic image becomes a forum to (net)work. She writes:

The photograph is a platform upon which traces from the encounter between those present in the situation of photography are inscribed, whether the participants are present by choice, through force, knowingly, indifferently, as a result of being *overlooked* or as a consequence of deceit. Many of these traces are neither planned nor are they the result of an act of will. That which is seen, the referent of the photograph in other words, is never a given but needs to be constituted to precisely the same degree as the interpretations which have become attached to it. ("Photography" 76, italics added)

This definition of the photograph recalls Zylinska's notion of photographs as 'participants of events'. According to Azoulay (74) there are two events when we speak of photography: *the event of photography* and *the photographed event*. In this connection, it is interesting to reflect about absences or the overlooked in photographs: The event of photography encompasses everything that is in a photograph but is only noticed at a later point as well as everything that does not feature in the photograph itself but is added to the image in its different viewing contexts.

Azoulay underscores that the mere presence of a (visible or sensible) camera in a place creates commotion in that it affects the (human) movement there, although it does not necessarily lead to a photograph being made (72-73). The event of photography sometimes creates commotion without creating any images. Sites of memory, partly because they are so closely connected to the tourist experience, are typically places in which potential camera movement influences other movement. Since visitors at tourist sights are constantly aware that they are probably being recorded in others' snapshots, we can assume that they are already 'acting for the camera'. Another element that creates commotion at a site is the obvious presence of a researcher, someone who hangs around longer than others, seeming to already know the site and have a different kind of regard. Especially my attempts to record something were often met with suspicion by other visitors – as if I was a surveillance

camera monitoring them and taking something from them against their will.

Azoulay writes that the camera is not aware of what it observes when taking a photograph. Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes and Siegfried Kracauer have all examined the notion of a camera's unconscious, overlooked recordings, and the accidental details in photographs and how they are read. Meir Wigoder (28) elaborates:

In this new order, belonging to the 'general inventory' of the archive, photography can yield information that had hitherto gone unnoticed. In writing that 'it is the task of photography to disclose this previously unexamined foundation of nature', Kracauer anticipates Benjamin's definition of photography's optical unconscious that enables an image to store and release meanings that were neither perceived by the photographer nor recognized by his peers.

On another level, even someone who has nothing to do with the photographed event can become involved in the event of photography by encountering the remixed image later through photomediations that were facilitated by the photograph's travels.<sup>93</sup>

Azoulay writes: 'The event of photography is never over. It can only be suspended, caught in the anticipation of the next encounter that will allow for its actualization'. It 'is subject to a unique form of temporality - it is made up of an infinite series of encounters' (77). These encounters are unforeseeable because they depend on the manifold *relations* a snapshot makes, especially a digital snapshot posted online. As a 'networked image', Ross Varney and Michael Wamposzyc write in *Photomediations*, 'it could be argued that the image itself has become secondary and in many ways subordinate to the form and function of the network'. In turn, the network is made of the encounters of and with the photograph.

Stephan Günzel also addresses the manifold encounters with the photograph, adding a phenomenological angle to its spatiovisuality, the moments and spatial formations in which it is viewed. In "Photography and Space: Modes of Production", he develops Philippe Debois's figure of the topological space of a photograph by drawing from Merleau-Ponty's notion of the intertwining. Günzel (87) concludes:

...[T]he part of the world which has been cut off in the

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<sup>93</sup> I should also mention the many artistic projects which remix private photographs – the artist's own or found images – to create new artworks. The recent exhibition *Photo-Poetics* organized by Guggenheim Museum curator Jennifer Blessing, for example, anthologizes a range of them (Deutsche Bank KunstHalle Berlin, 10 July – 30 August 2015 and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 20 November 2015 – 23 March 2016).

photographic act is now substituted by the milieu in which the picture is viewed. So the view of the spectator might oscillate between the absent off-space of the image-world and the present off-space of the frame or the picture as a material object.

This further develops Azoulay's concept of the photograph as an infinite series of encounters via a phenomenological notion of spatiality and materiality. Next to Günzel's 'off-space', the overlooked and the absent in the photographed event can be transported into the picture by being connected with its different viewing contexts. Encounters take and make place and thereby co-create and transform – mediate – the photograph's visuality. I find that the same is true for the dynamic life of objects and sites of cultural memory, which is traceable through the various encounters of and with the snapshot, not least the encounter or *route* (to borrow from Zylinska) that an academic thesis or paper *arranges*.

These theoretical and methodological remarks lead me to consider the ways in which the snapshot is involved in – or acts as *oversight* in cultural memory in the next section. I do not (only) inquire about the *meanings* of the *contents* of snapshots for their authors or 'owners', but am interested in the lives of the snapshots and how they mingle, especially in the visual field, and the situations and practices that produce and mediate them.

### **What is an 'oversight'?**

We are living in an era of incessant self-portrayal, with photographs instantly shared on social media to solicit real-time reactions in the form of 'likes' (or 'dislikes'). Deleted scenes and overlooked or discarded images, unrealized snapshots (that have not been taken) as well as snapshots that look unconventional are gaining new significance. It is the rather atypical snapshots that I want to discuss using the concept of *oversight* and illustrate it with tourist picturing practices at sites of memory.

The Online Etymological Dictionary traces 'oversight' back to two verbs that are each connected to one of the word's two meanings: *overseeing* referring to supervision, and *overlooking* referring to omission.<sup>94</sup> Both practices are connected with tourists' sightseeing practices which include the whole repertoire of visuality: seeing, not seeing, overseeing and overlooking, moving to see or framing to blend out

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<sup>94</sup> [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=oversight&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0;](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=oversight&allowed_in_frame=0;)  
[http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=oversee&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0.](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=oversee&allowed_in_frame=0)

something. I employ the term almost exclusively with respect to the latter quality of overlooking, *not* (being aware of) seeing something, respectively seeing or staging a ‘meaningful emptiness’, to intentionally or unintentionally picture a blind spot.<sup>95</sup>

The snapshot scene epitomizes tourist photography. Vision and sight resonate in the term *visitor*, which stems from the Anglo-French *visere*, ‘to behold’, and *videre*, ‘to see, notice, observe’: the whole idea of the tourist practice of visiting sites of interest is to ‘go to see for oneself’ – the literal meaning of visit.<sup>96</sup> I wish to investigate that the concept ‘oversight’ combines spatiality with the visual and the material; an oversight is also an oversight and the effect of a spatiovisual encounter, such as the snapshot from a visit to a memorial site. *Oversights* describe the relations of objects at locations, their visual appropriations and realized or unrealized visualizations.

Our potential access to memory stuff is increasingly visualized with the help of technologies: from the photograph on the computer screen to the eyewitness hologram in classrooms, the (audio)visual seems to be gathering the most accessible repertoire of mediated memories. It is ‘accessible’ in the sense that it is more easily sharable than, for example, olfactory or haptic memories, which are said to have a much stronger impact on an individual. However, that experience is difficult to share directly with others, although olfactory and haptic memories inevitably also impact the visual sense. The accessibility of the visual is increasingly supported by, and entangled with, digital technologies. As Latour argues, this increases the materiality of picturing activities and mediated memories.<sup>97</sup> The presence and agency of recording devices in tourist picturing practices at sites of memory underscore Latour’s argument. Now I will turn to observations of these practices as they manifest in the local encounter of a human body with a camera device and a site becoming a sight-as-motif and a manifest snapshot, later exemplifying the different modes of *oversight*.

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<sup>95</sup> Nicholas Mirzoeff takes the first path in *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (35ff), where oversight takes on a panoptical meaning of monitoring, visually controlling the actions of the Other. Mirzoeff describes the visuality of slavery and especially the plantation system as the ‘visuality of oversight’ (36).

<sup>96</sup> [http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=visit&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=visit&allowed_in_frame=0).

<sup>97</sup> ‘But what I like most in the new networks is that the expansion of digitality has enormously increased the *material* dimension of networks: the more digital, the *less virtual and the more material* a given activity becomes’ (‘Networks, Societies, Spheres’ 8). See also the article by Evelyn Ruppert, John Law and Mike Savage, ‘Reassembling Social Science Methods’, on digital research practices.

### **Tourist picturing practices at sites of memory**

I have observed roughly five different types of visitors to or five types of performances at, Sowetan tourist sights when I followed their arrival, physical movements, as well as their interactions with other people and, especially, with their photographic devices.<sup>98</sup> One group of sightseers remains in the buses and cars: they merely drive by the scenes and points of interest, raising their cameras and tablets. In the South African townships with a slowly fading reputation for violence, this practice is still comparatively widespread; at Danish beaches it is practically unknown. Then there are those visitors who hold up tablets or digital camera devices as they are exiting their vehicles, so that they only see the scene displayed on the screen. Members of the third group take photographs whenever a personal (human) guide or a guiding signpost terms a scene ‘important’; a fourth type follows no particular ‘picturing plan’ but likes to take snaps of (side) scenes like a curio vendor smoking or joking, a passing woman, a security guard taking a break and so forth. Finally, there is a fifth group of people who, wherever they go, take almost only images of themselves and their peers posing next to the memorial or another feature of the site. They often pose without taking any notice of the visited site, and prefer to make most of their holiday snaps while dining or drinking and chatting *after* sightseeing. These are only rough sketches of the five groups: the various picturing practices overlap and the individual tourist most likely uses the practices of more than one group.

We can also try to derive different motivations for taking snapshots through observation. Talking with people about their (intrinsic) motivations has been somewhat difficult, albeit interesting: I can’t help thinking that most of what I’ve been told was made up on the spot and unlikely to ever be the subject of conversation (which of course does not ‘disqualify’ it as account). The first response was almost always, ‘I don’t know. I just do it’ – after which the person seemed to feel the urge to find an explanation, a valid justification for their own picturing practices to ‘confess to the researcher’. For the Western (especially White) tourist this often was accompanied by a vague notion of shared guilt for being ‘only a tourist’ (not an NGO

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<sup>98</sup> I have to add that my findings are not based on an ethnomethodological study of visual events including all possible visual phenomena (see, for instance, Charles Goodwin on what such a study may imply). I would have liked to present at least one or two detailed examples drawing from actor-network theory or ethnomethodology, but this was prohibited by the loss of my visual research material and particular my own recordings of the observed events.

worker or activist, I assume), which often results in very long and sensational stories about a lot more than their pictures.<sup>99</sup>

Nevertheless, to some degree it is possible to observe how and when people take pictures. Some think of what they are photographing *before* they press the shutter release. Others just take a picture to make sure that they ‘have’ it. In case they missed it, they take one or two snaps more than the first group. This is obviously a prevailing feature since the advent of digital devices and it certainly makes these devices more present and visible at the sites. There are two ways: For some visitors the scene or memorial first becomes interesting when they *take out* their cameras. They could be described as waiting for the site itself to activate (their cameras) – to afford their picture taking. Others first show signs of involvement when they take *down* or pack away their recording devices so they can ‘see clearly’ – without the interruption of the device.

With these different picturing practices at memorial sites in mind, I elaborate my concept of *oversight* by presenting another selection of snapshots: my own, photographs from people I met while doing fieldwork and photographs I found on Flickr.



Fig. 30: Blåvand

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<sup>99</sup> See Marcela Knapp and my article “Wild Inside” on German Africa tourists’ vindictory strategies.





Fig. 31: Soweto I



Fig. 32: Soweto II

These three holiday snapshots have something in common. They all illustrate – in different ways – the overlooked in cultural memory: It is not clear what the snapshot meant to show – or what it intended to overlook (fig. 30); the snapshot seems to show nothing but an absence of something (fig. 31); and the snapshot displays something that is visually out of focus – and that is actually the snapshot’s thematic focus that inspired the act of taking it (fig. 32). In many cases, only a second glance, a closer look, a rearrangement, and of course a caption or explanations next to the snapshots, allow us to fully grasp them – at least in more detail. Most of the snapshots are atypical, a bit weird, maybe even a bit boring. Nevertheless, they attract our attention because they look different or because they seem to lack something.

Mediating the past in the present means communicating absences with the help of visible or invisible, tangible or intangible traces. These traces – proper monuments or other memorial sites, accidental leftovers or mere physical absence – are gathered and related in tourist picturing practices. When we disentangle the visual work of cultural memory, we realize that it is connected to four different modes of *oversight*:

1. Overlooking a memorial or monument in sight
2. Overseeing and picturing an empty site that refers to an absent past
3. The photograph as oversight I: To overlook something in an image
4. The photograph as oversight II: Overlooked images

These four modes are rarely strictly separated: often two or even three are entangled in the photographed event.

### **Overlooking a memorial or monument in sight**

A range of historians and cultural theorists has discussed the unattractive or just plain boring monument as a widespread aspect of memorialization projects. Austrian writer Robert Musil famously wrote on ‘Denkmale’ [monuments] in *Unfreundliche Betrachtungen*:

The most noticeable aspect of monuments is that you don’t notice them. There’s nothing in the world as invisible as monuments. (...) Monuments miss their main profession. You cannot say that we do not notice [*nicht bemerken*] them, rather they de-notice

[*entmerken*] us. They elude our senses: this property of theirs is actually quite positively a drive for action [*Tätlichkeit*].<sup>100</sup>

According to Musil, being overlooked, or rather, *affording* to be overlooked, is the only quality and agency of monuments. Andreas Huyssen in “Monumental Seduction” departs from Musil’s famous quote to plead for ‘monumental invisibility’. He observes the interesting conflict with respect to memorialization projects, which confronts us with a ‘privileging of the transitory, the ephemeral, the provisional’ on one hand and a ‘desire for lasting monumentality’ on the other (188).<sup>101</sup>

Musil asks the monuments themselves to make an effort to attract, perhaps by being more colourful and flashy, or, as I argue in Chapters 2 and 3 regarding ‘The Story of Soweto’ at the Regina Mundi Church, to catch people’s attention by surprising, being integrated into the quotidian yet offering a space that invites appropriation. Overlooked leftovers of history, whether invisible or all too visible, show how cultural topographies are transformed. As I argue throughout this thesis, tourist snapshots at sites of memory are a good starting point for enquiring about the invisibility of memorials because they are triggered by mundane reactions and appropriations – not solely scholarly interpretation.

Figure 30 is a portrait of the author on Blaavand beach during her summer holiday. It is foremost a snapshot of a holiday moment, a rest after digging in the sand (note the children’s spade). At the same time, another actor, which probably was overlooked in the event of taking the photograph, fills the image: a Second World War bunker half-sunk in the dune – the same bunker as in figure 21 in the preceding chapter. The snapshot shows the bunker acting as oversight – as part of the visited landscape and part of the snapshot. It is integrated into a holiday and family scene as a lounge: it was not staged as fascist architecture. It is presented, not necessarily consciously (because the focus is the portrait of a woman), as a site ‘worth’ overlooking (Kimpel, “Übersehenswürdigkeiten”, see Chapter 4 for a discussion).

Whether or not the bunker had been noticed in the event of taking the photograph, it is made present in the image. With the bunker staged as an overlooked vernacular prop, the snapshot perpetuates a ‘neutral commemoration’ of the bunker. The bunker, which was overlooked when the photograph was taken, is probably

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<sup>100</sup> Translated from German by the author

<sup>101</sup> In *Present Pasts* Huyssen furthermore postulates a ‘monument fatigue’: ‘[A]ny monument will always run the risk of becoming just another testimony to forgetting, a cipher of invisibility’ (80-81).

overlooked many more times – whenever the photograph is viewed. Nevertheless, even as oversight, it has a lasting material presence in the image. Remembrance of the difficult heritage of World War II thus becomes a part of photomediation.

### **Overseeing and picturing an empty site that refers to an absent past**

Figure 31 shows a street in Soweto with a junction in the background. There is no indication or presence to suggest why the image was made: perhaps it is just a snap of an ordinary street in Soweto. Then again, the framing is rather unusual for a street scene, and so is that of the house (if the latter was meant to be the focus). The photograph seems to focus on the ‘empty’ spot in front of the house, on the street itself. Viewed within the context of cultural memory, the snapshot points toward its own blind spot, something latent in the image, visible as emptiness, the present absence of a former event. We learn or guess from the title (‘Famous Photo Site’) that it is exactly that: a photograph of a site where something happened, namely, where a famous and iconic photo was taken.

The photograph referred to is none other than Sam Nzima’s capture of Mbuyisa Makhubu carrying the dead body of Hector Pieterse (remember fig. 27 and 28, especially IMG\_2285). Thus, the snapshot is also a photograph of another photograph – which is only present as absence. It is a photograph of the event of another photograph – thereby continuing that event and relating it to many more photographs, like those in this chapter. Interestingly, the snapshot refers to Sam Nzima’s photograph as an historical event to be remembered, and only indirectly to the photographed event that gave rise to the photograph, the Soweto Uprising. By revisiting the photo site, it visibly opens up the photograph’s off-space (Günzel), not only inviting the viewer to the location of *this* snapshot but also into the surroundings of that other iconic snapshot taken in 1976. It does so by staging and showing absence, which at one and the same time becomes an act of making room and creating a presence. Sandbye writes that ‘an important aspect of photography as performance is to articulate and transmit a feeling of presence’ (“It has not been – it *is*”). The feeling of the presence of an absence is particularly transmitted here. This is the mnemonic quality of *oversights*: they point to absences that need to remain and remind, and by doing so continue to make the absences present.

### **The photograph as oversight I: To overlook something in an image**

Figure 32 shows the back of a bus seat with its slightly twisted cover in the left foreground, as well as the window through which we see a brick wall and a Coca Cola sponsored sign for Orlando High School. The fact that the photo was taken through a closed bus window suggests that it was taken on a sightseeing tour through Soweto. That raises our interest in the pictured wall, which, although it is blurry, we reckon, must be the actual thematic focus of the image. The title given to the image explains: ‘Hector Pieterseon [*sic*] – wall where he was shot’. The fact that the wall is out of focus makes it particularly interesting. This is not just (but admittedly also) another picture of the wall (part of the Soweto ‘Struggle Route’) built using bricks like those used in the Hector Pieterseon Museum and Memorial, commemorating the route of the 16 June 1976 uprising. As an *oversight* – a site of memory visualized as out of sight – the photograph actively plays with the dynamics of remembrance and forgetting. The snapshot presents a possibility of simultaneously overseeing and overlooking how and where the past reaches into the present.

One could even argue that this snapshot mocks and questions the image industry of heritage tourism and the practice of driving by points of historical interest. The superficiality of this visit is exaggerated in the image which mocks staged monuments but also elicits genuine curiosity about the barely visible sight – because it is out of sight. It plays between the first mode of oversight, the overlooked-because-boring monument, and the second quality of oversight, actively staging absence. Figure 32 sets a sight in scene as *almost* overlooked. The time needed to locate the wall referred to in the title creates more interest and sustains viewers’ attention.

### **The photograph as oversight II: Overlooked images**

The photograph itself can act as oversight when it is being overlooked – like the unnoticed, invisible monument. Musil explained this monumental invisibility in the way we can overlook anything after having gotten used to it – for example, the picture hanging on our living room wall. Some images are not seen properly and therefore cannot fully unfold their communicative qualities. Because we are saturated with certain kinds of images, we overlook certain things in an image while also seeing

them.<sup>102</sup> This mode of oversight is part of the tourist experience, where a certain type of sightseeing snapshot taken over and over again no longer has much of an impact on its viewers.

Paul Frosh makes an interesting point related to this kind of snapshot-as-oversight. He refers to ‘visual inattention’ (“Indifferent Looks” 174), the indifference towards images as a ‘social-material practice’ – when the sheer amount of images makes us not *see* an image:

(...) a routinization of corporeal and perceptual connective energies, both tactile and visual, that produces sameness from movement in a context characterized by the superfluity of representations and perceptual stimuli. In other words, against the hierarchal privileging of singularity and visual attentiveness as key characteristics of photographic significance, it is actually the qualities of indifference, sameness and visual displacement that routinely serve as the ground for experiencing photography’s way of showing the world. (177-178)

Discussing the ‘rhetorics of the overlooked’ regarding stock advertising images, Frosh concludes that ‘the image itself could also be called invisible’<sup>103</sup> but that ‘cultural analysts, by and large, are not interested in the ways in which images are overlooked’ (“Rhetorics of the Overlooked” 172). What is it then that sometimes makes us stop and look attentively? Doesn’t the overlooked also play a crucial part in *attentive* looking? The ways of overlooking are manifold: *Not seeing* can also have ‘positive’ effects when, for instance, stereotypical (exoticizing or otherwise reductive) snapshots taken at African tourist destinations lose their attraction, making room for other, somewhat unusual, images to influence the global image of the continent, which has been extremely biased through the prevailing tourist imagery (and other causes).

### **Oversights: Moving sights – missing images**

For over a decade, the interplay between mobility and vision in the tourist practice – of moving along, encountering, seeing and recording sights – has been a focus of research in cultural geography. Mike Crang was probably one of the first to call for new methodologies to research ‘touristic picturing practices’ which ‘offer a useful

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<sup>102</sup> Thanks to Devika Sharma for making me aware of this aspect of an oversight. Devika’s example was the face of a young black boy on a milk carton illustrating a charity’s fundraising cause, the urgency of which is overlooked or even ignored because of the saturation with similar images.

<sup>103</sup> Sandbye declares the same for the photographic medium in general: ‘Fotografierne er så selvklaare, at vi ikke ser dem’ (*Kedelige Billeder* 7).

ground in which to explore the role of visual practices in creating experiences through temporal and spatial manipulation, and to reconsider the relationships between viewing subjects and objects of vision' (366). Once again, we are confronted with the affordance of sites of memory (see Chapter 2) in the interplay with the approaching visitor, who, equipped with a more or less suitable camera or other recording devices, is 'encouraged' (or not) to take their own image of the encountered scene.

The four examples above show that all the oversight modes intertwine the visible and the invisible as well as the seeing and seen actors – the subjects and objects of vision that Crang discusses. Oversights combine different instances of the snapshot's spatiovisuality: the moment and place it is being taken, the moments when the photographer recalls the encountered scene and its capture, the times and places the picture is shared (distributed, exhibited, shown) and remediated, and the (never) ending moments when it is viewed, seen, discussed – or overlooked.

In addition to engaging with the snapshots, two cases made me further consider the notion of oversight while observing everyday life at Soweto's sites of memory: the unsatisfying and unrealized snaps. Although visitors might not find a certain site photogenic (and say so), they nevertheless spend a few moments thinking about what to photograph and then may take one or two 'unsatisfied' snaps. Often people look and wander around a site, somewhat lost, before they peer through their viewfinders or at their screens to check the picture-to-be, searching for the right spot to capture. The tourist practice of sightseeing is so entangled with visual experience and visual appropriation – people seem to feel an urge to produce their own visuals – that we observe their interesting negotiations with visibility, especially when there seems to be nothing to picture or when it is mere absence that they try to image.

The other case is the fact of 'unrealized images' – when a tourist or visitor recalls memorable scenes of their encounter with a site that they hadn't known how to capture, when they have 'a memory' and 'an image' of the encounter but nothing material (no snapshot) to reflect it. In *Empathic Vision* (100-101), Jill Bennett in a similar vein describes the Western Cape Action Tour that brought her to the sites of important events in the anti-apartheid struggle:

I was initially struck by the ordinariness of the locations we visited. (...) Each time our small group left the van we were unsure of what we should be looking at - what might be important in the landscape or part of the township at which we

had arrived. (...) I wandered around wondering what and how to photograph.

While I was sitting with other tourists over dinner or at the fireside and chatting about their daily adventures in Soweto and how they experienced sites commemorating the anti-apartheid struggle or simply township life then and now, people mentioned a feeling similarly conflicted about knowing what and how to photograph. They often interrupted their stories with sentences like ‘I am sorry but I cannot show you a picture of this’ or ‘I did not take a picture for some reason but that was most impressive’ or, while showing me a photograph on a screen, say: ‘Arrh, you cannot really see it here, but it was really impressive’ (the case of the unsatisfied snap).

Such instances are by no means exceptional. They are common when tourists reminisce sites/sights (and oversights), their own (visual) experience and memories of them. I would even argue that the more visitors become involved in what they encounter and experience, the more they are affected and taken in by a certain scene, the less they will try to get ‘their own’ photograph by any means possible. Jill Bennett asks: ‘How does one encapsulate the history of a locale that today is traversed by so many inhabitants going about their daily business? More precisely, how can this past and this present be interwoven in some form of memory image?’ Such memory images often are not visualized, and if they are, in order for them to live on, to socialize, they mostly carry the appearance of an absence, an *oversight*. This emptiness in the image is what affords remembrance and further creative appropriation, making cultural memory work on.

In the last part of this chapter, I return to the actor-network methodology discussed in Chapter 2.

### **From blind spots to black boxes: ANT and the theme of oversight**

A place is not (only) because of what it is not, through the work of boundaries, but in its gathering and collusion of othernesses and spatiotemporal elsewheres – in Callon and Law’s terms, its fine internal array of presences and absences. (Oppenheim 486)

This quote from anthropologist Robert Oppenheim offers us a way to read oversights in terms of actor-network theory and to understand sites of memory as a ‘gathering and collusion of othernesses and spatiotemporal elsewheres’. An oversight illustrates the ‘internal array of presences and absences’ of a site of memory, explicated by the



visual memory work that organizes around it and is afforded by it.

Latour himself refers to a vocabulary of visuality when he writes that an ANT study offers ‘a list of situations where an object’s activity is made easily visible’ (*Reassembling* 79). For a researcher to ‘make visible’ means laying bare the internal array of presences and absences that can be described. ‘What was invisible becomes visible, what had seemed self-contained is now widely redistributed’, Latour writes (“Networks, Societies, Spheres” 5). Latour’s ‘invisibility’ describes an invisible actor as an actor that is often overlooked in descriptions of certain actions – perhaps resulting from the anthropocentrism of much science, but not necessarily due to certain ideological oversights such as eurocentrism. The invisible is an actor that is not talked about or mentioned although he/she/it obviously plays a role in enabling a certain action. This could be the camera operator for a photograph or, on another level, the barely visible traces of a certain past event and the memory of it. It also applies to the not-fancy sights or unexpected events at tourist sights.

Actor-network methodology is also, or primarily, sensitive to oversights in research practice, and everything that is often overlooked in the process of making conclusions or presenting ‘results’.



Fig. 33. Bruno Latour: *Figure 11.7*. ‘Sur cette photo on ne voit rien de net’. 1993.

It seeks to make visible and create room for all the overlooked little steps in our act of ‘jumping’ to conclusions. If we recall Chapter 2 where I reflect on Latour’s photo-philosophical montages, this is exactly what his *Figure 11.7* (above) does: The image breaks with the style, and especially the somewhat predictable chronology, of the six photographs that precede it. It is also an excellent example of my third mode of photographic oversight: it pictures the soil scientists as out of sight and, by granting the foreground to the forest, visualizes and underscores who the main actor in their research venture is. Thinking about my own fieldwork, where I focused on picturing practices when encountering a sight, in the future I will make more of an effort to engage with the people who are *not* taking photographs or making video clips. This was an oversight in my own research.

On yet another level of actor-network methodology, in the context of this thesis, an oversight could be compared to a Latourian blackbox: it refers to an absence that is not visible, not obvious, not talked about: although it is only implied it is active and stimulates other actions. Oversights at sites of memory are often subsumed or ‘blackboxed’, that is they disappear into the larger concepts of ‘cultural heritage tourism’ or ‘tourist photography’. With regard to their entanglement with South African history, the oversights that these snapshots trace and relate also reveal long-standing acts of priming the available tourist experiences for the global tourism industry. The presentation of South African histories of struggle (which are still visible in today’s economic and political landscapes) and their promotion as an important tourist experience that is ‘available’ at innumerable sites beyond Robben Island and the Apartheid Museum (Hlongwane), flouts the usual ‘tourist package’, the ‘tourist blackbox’ for this destination, which mainly offers safaris and wine tasting.

Increasingly the traces which make these overlooked sites and sights of memory visible to a bigger audience are also visitors’ appropriations of them, like the snapshots made public. The snapshot is made of and communicates a ‘spatiotemporal elsewhere’. Here we meet again with Günzel’s topological space of the photograph: the wider scene of the snapshot is completed in the event of photography in its encounters with future audiences. With regard to the bunkers along Danish beaches, it is the snapshots that enable further encounters with and debates about this difficult heritage.

### **Conclusion: *Oversights* net-work through tourist vision**

In the modes of oversights discussed above, the tourist's 'habitual' picturing or viewing practice is disrupted in two ways. Either the anticipation of a picturesque scene is disappointed by the scene which is visually boring, etc. or the strong emotions felt at a location and the urge to capture it in a snapshot are halted by its 'emptiness', the absence of a marker or visible trace that is tangible or communicable. Throughout my research, I've noticed that although the tourist practice is tied to visual experience and the tourist's own visual production, visual absence and invisibility, and how the tourist deals with them also play crucial roles in remembering (others') pasts and encountering (others') memories. How do oversights network? When does one notice that something is out of sight, and how do we meet and engage with absences? How are they staged, and can invisibility be 'a guide towards seeing "better"', as Mieke Bal asks in "Stasis"?

Central to the work of public commemoration, and cultural memory in general, is the communication of and with absences (absent pasts, sometimes even material traces that are absent from that past). It involves acts and narrations that activate the awareness of gaps and voids in order to reveal their full potential. Sometimes this is accomplished by some form of guidance (a tourist guide, a book, a sign post) or by 'the things themselves' – an environment that makes the overlookable present (therefore visible) as well as what is absent or invisible for reasons we cannot fully grasp. Sometimes the ways that sites afford are more obvious, as in the case of bunkers overgrown with grass, or abandoned houses.

Especially in a tourist landscape marked by sights and signposts, *oversights* – the voids and gaps between the sights in sight – get special attention. Most often the sights afford attention to the oversights, both of which gather in the same place (to paraphrase Oppenheim). Having highlighted the many modes of oversights at play in the encounter of tourist sites and tourists' visual appropriations, Chapter 6 examines *intentional absences* in the work of two South African photographers, juxtaposing them with tourist snapshots.

## 6. Encountering Over/sights. Remembering Invisible Pasts Through Photography

### Abstract

The article juxtaposes two fields and techniques of visual memory and memorialization – tourist snapshots and art photography – in their capacity to set memory on the move translocally. Circulating through media and exhibition spaces, both modes of engagement offer an encounter with other's memories. I propose that this encounter is enhanced when the image creatively deals with absences in the sense of missing, overseen as overtly visible, or overlooked props in a landscape. Introducing the notion of *oversight* to capture these dynamics of spatial vision in dealing with media of memory, I will illustrate the shifting visibility and invisibility of memory by zooming in on South African *memoryscapes* via a selection of images taken by tourists and South African photographers Thabiso Sekgala and David Goldblatt. I argue that a joint reading of these conventionally different media of memory shows their mutually enriching features for the study of memory, visibility and alterity.

### **Memory-work and alterity: The role of absences**

Remembrance is a social act. It takes place through making relations between different actors, materials and media. As such it always involves a vis-à-vis, an other, another person or object of confrontation. Though various politicized layers of otherness are at play in visual representations and tourist imaginaries of places in the Global South, and particularly Southern Africa, the article focuses on otherness as the very basic event of encountering another. This encounter on 'new ground', so I argue, is enabled through certain 'modes of engagement', a term I borrow from Jill Bennett (14), to describe cultural media and materials acting to differing degrees as points of contact, for example a memorial site, a film or a private photograph. Remembering past events and injuries is mediated in the present by artistic and other cultural reflections and representations as well as the individual appropriations these gather. Difficult heritages (Macdonald) of war, colonialism or Apartheid that caused substantial changes in a culture's self-understanding and -image are furthermore re-worked in cultural tourism and the tourist heritage industry where physical memorials guide the tourist's routes through destinations.

It is through art in the form of globally circulating objects and images and transnational tourism, the physical travel to and experiencing of sites of memory, and visualizing this encounter, that individuals have access to other's memories and other forms of memory. In this article, I will zoom in on ways of setting memory images in motion and discuss how these images themselves have the capacity to move others, emotionally and physically. In a first step I will look at a specific kind of tourist snapshot taken at or in-between tourist sights out of which I develop my notion of *oversight* – a creative typology of (not) visualizing (memorial) sites. With this notion in mind I will turn to the photographic work of David Goldblatt and Thabiso Sekgala to see how both artists in similar ways creatively work with absences in memoryscapes.

The notion of absence is of particular importance here proposing that gaps and voids, the missing sight in views, are most productive for keeping an interest and participation in memory work alive. Achille Mbembe (16) reflects on absences in the postcolonial 'time of entanglement', writing:

It may be supposed that the presence as *experience of a time* is precisely that moment when different forms of absence become mixed together: absence of those presences that are no longer so and that one remembers (the past), and absence of those others that are yet to come and are anticipated (the future).

The article takes up on these different absences and analyses how they manifest in differently circulating cultural mnemonic forms.

Pasts are woven continuously and often unseen into places and images. While a proper monumental tourist sight often features a material presence in places to remind of absences, a photograph can display an image of a seemingly empty place while nevertheless evoking a *feeling* of a present absence, or it can display a built memorial site that nevertheless appears *out of sight*. It is not always possible or even necessary to detect an explicit reference or pictorial representation to a difficult past or a traumatic incident in a cultural form to sense or reflect on this past. Rather do what I would like to call *intentional absences*, that is gaps, lacks and voids in both art works and, though maybe more unintentional, in tourist snapshots play an important role for memory work. They can make us backpedal, question, think and wonder. These imaginary acts are important for keeping memory work alive and fostering encounters of different people, incidents, objects and places at different times.

Voids take different forms along the tourist route: An either overwhelming monumental presence or a physical absence of a marked sight makes visitors pause and reflect. These memories do not always materialize in photographs as they don't fit the usual tourist snapshot's design but they nevertheless live on as memorable experience and 'unrealized images' (see the previous chapter). Whenever they do materialize in a picture, they also reflect on the character of sight and surrounding and the status of *oversights*.

### **From sight to oversight – shifting memoryscapes in tourism**

Encountering other's pasts in the present is strongly connected to spatial vision, the perception of, and orientation of the body in space as well as travelling imaginaries of a place. One case in point is the tourist experience at intended or unintended sites of remembrance. Those 'sights' are situated in a shifting field of visibility, ranging between visible presence and absence, between seeing and unseen, and involved in various struggles over the authority of visualization.<sup>104</sup> From the shiny built monument, commemorating the fallen heroes of an uprising, to the almost unnoticed ruins and traces of colonial apartheid segregation politics structuring both rural and urban everyday environments, South African memorial space can take the form of both *sight* and *oversight* depending on its different appropriations and manifestations. The concept *oversight* helps us to grasp moving spatial vision, the interplay of space, place and material and the dynamics of visibility and invisibility in memory work. This dynamic is understood here first and foremost as an agency not based on a hierarchy of power relations determining what and who is visible and who isn't.

In the case of Southern Africa, we face the haunting presence of colonial apartheid topographies in the photographs of Sekgala and Goldblatt (Enwezor, "The Indeterminate Structure" 29), while the tourist industry often transports another memory that takes the form of an imagined colonial nostalgia romanticizing vast, seemingly empty, landscapes, playing on deeply rooted fantasies of colonial travel and expansion and an imagined elegance of a colonial past. Nevertheless, it would be too easy and unsatisfying to simply discard all tourist visual practice as conformist consuming behaviour, solely lead by global capitalist interests that reproduce an age-old colonial stereotype and actively prevent new visions to be spread – and the

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<sup>104</sup> Compare Nicholas Mirzoeff's "The Right to Look" 478.

examples in this article prove this reading wrong. It is a fact, though, that many tourist markets in the Global South are geared to popular views of their travel destination in the Global North to ensure satisfied customers and to not run the risk of disappointing expectations, which naturally leads to a reproduction of out-dated, colonialist stereotypes and a degrading role allocation on the tourist front stage.

But, as always, there are exceptions. Some memorable scenes from each trip contradict the dominant image. We can find these prominently among snapshots of memorial sites and in-between landmarks on tour. Since what is negotiated under the term cultural tourism is on the rise in South Africa, fuelled by the heritage and conservation architects, more and more tourists visit the cities, often guided by heritage landmarks. Photos of the newly built monuments also feature famously in the tourists' private archives of memorable vacation views and moments. In these tourist snapshots we meet the problematic of *oversight* again, either induced through an overt presence of boring physical monuments and the ever same 'I was here photos' each and every one takes, or through the absence of focus in vacation snapshots producing accidental photos of non-sites or unusual spaces, where the photographer seemingly didn't know where to look (see fig. 35).

Tourists are most of the time guided on their trips and journeys by tangible, often visible, landmarks, following and restaging recognizable tourist sights. A 'sight worth seeing' (translated from the German word for tourist site, *Sehenswürdigkeit*) is a built space popular in the 'social field of view' and accepted in the moral economy of sightseeing (MacCannell, "Sightseeing and Social Structure"). It is a sight that made and makes a lasting – not least visual – impact, often attracting foreign tourists and their imaging technologies through its monumental, material presence or a narrative told about it, sacralizing the site in question (MacCannell 42-44; Aleida Assmann 299). Their status can shift, however, from being in sight to being out of sight, from unnoticed to major to overlooked landmark, from presence to absence through deterioration or simply disinterest and general monumental saturation and fatigue on the part of the visitors.

Interestingly, the term 'oversight' can refer to acts of supervision at the same time as it points to an error in seeing. Overseeing something can mean to monitor and see the whole field of view, to look over a broad space, and, at the same time, to unintentionally *not* see or notice something. This overlooking-as-not-seeing refers to

an object of vision nevertheless existent in the visual field. In such moments of overlooking one cannot see the past for the monuments. Andreas Huyssen formulates a similar concern in “Monumental Seduction”, arguing that the proliferation of monuments produces invisibility and, as a consequence, forgetting (184) at the same time as it is these built formations that often manage to remain and preserve information about a past and carrying a story from generation to generation. Next to monuments or other ‘proper memorials’ as formations built to commemorate, it can also be discreet hints at remainders that make the memory of a past available to others.



Fig. 34. Ryan: ‘Student Uprising Memorial’. 5 January 2009. Colour photograph. Flickr.

Built memorials can also become overlooked, left aside or left to the course of time and natural decay. There are plenty of disused memorial sites in South Africa, once built for commemoration practices, now taken away from the tourist map, continuing their life as traces widely unnoticed as in the photograph above taken by a US-American tourist to Soweto (fig. 34). It shows London based South African artist Johannes Phokela’s memorial to Teboho ‘Tsietsi’ Mashinini, one of the student leaders during the Soweto Uprising in 1976, slowly overgrowing with grass in the park of Morris Isaacson High School in Soweto.



What is striking about this photo is that it is somewhat consciously designed as snapshot of an oversight in the sense that its object in focus – the student uprising memorial (corresponding to the title given) – is somewhat out of focus. Special attention in the composition of the image is paid to the surrounding of the landmark, underlining its atypical foreground, the untended environment of Phokela's installation. This highlights the importance of the landscape and everyday surrounding of the visited site, its double narrative so to speak of commemorative site attracting visitors on the one hand and ordinary student life on the other. The snapshot weaves past memories into the present and gives that mundane present a moderate space and attention, too. Additionally, the material image posted online facilitates the site's recognition by others, a landmark that would otherwise possibly remain overlooked.

Tourist snapshots, especially the ones taken off the popular theme parks and gated, separated sights, capture the temporality of places and the memories living on in them as traces spread over and dissolving in contemporary everyday life. At the same time they can (involuntarily) offer ironic glances at the tourist industry of sights to be seen and captured, like the following snapshot of another Sowetan sight, the house of archbishop Desmond Tutu.



Fig. 35. Fiona Henderson: 'Desmond Tutu's house'. 24 December 2009. Colour photograph. Flickr.

To be precise, this snapshot (fig. 35) shows the upper part of a white wall with a fence on top and lots of trees and bushes behind. Its design is slightly irritating with the wall that is not readily visible as such ranging diagonally into the picture. It makes one wonder why the author chose to capture this scene and detail and to present it – furnished with a title giving the needed explanation – in her Flickr photo stream online. No matter how untypical the image seems, it contains and raises itself a reflection about the dynamics of seeing and looking in tourism. Looking closely at such *oversight snaps* broadens the angle of tourist imagery in general. I would go as far as to say that this type of ‘boring image’, seemingly missing the mark, importantly challenges the stereotypical repertoire of exoticizing and *othering* images at African tourist destinations.

The encountering of oversights – either it in the form of discarded memorials (fig. 34) or as missed landmarks (fig. 35) – is at the same time tied to the notion of secrecy and many tourists’ wish to become insiders to another culture (locking out other tourists). It is connected to the tourist’s paradoxical urge to make most unique experiences in the sense of ‘discovering’ new views and sights, scenes and landscapes that have been ‘unseen’ and undocumented before. Encountering oversights as *othered* sights – sights which are thought of and presented as having definitely not been seen by the Western tourist – is thus increasingly becoming a status symbol and cultural capital of the traveller. One should be aware of the potential danger in this attraction of oversights as secret places, continuing the colonial adventure of discovery and the colonial imagination of the Otherness of the formerly colonized, misjudging the power of the own gaze. Nevertheless, the tourist’s interest for the sights of the everyday or her unusual visualizations of actual or former sights are a welcomed counterbalance to the exoticising and *othering* strategies at play in mainstream tourism industry.

I argue for yet another specificity of memorial site inherent in much of the photographic work of David Goldblatt and Thabiso Sekgala. Their views of landscapes and environments actively work with the shifting notions of sight and oversight. Their photographs – similar to the snapshots above – seem to hold something away from being seen at the same time as they have an eye for the oversights as discarded views of the present in which the past resonates. They point towards something latent in the image, its ‘blind spot’. Jill Bennett (85ff) underlines

that the importance of the work that art does lies in the moments of encounter that it opens rather than in an educational or revealing gesture. In this sense, artworks and, I would argue, any circulating, mediated material, including the tourist snapshot or souvenir, can not merely be understood as repositories of (other's) memory, but as mediators, motivating engagement with other memories.

### **Blind spots in (post-)apartheid landscapes: David Goldblatt and Thabiso Sekgala**

Visiting the exhibition 'A Blind Spot' in Berlin's *Haus der Kulturen der Welt* in summer 2012 which also featured a selection of David Goldblatt's photographs, I came to think about the relations of photography, memory and what I would meanwhile call 'creative absences'. Not only did my own hesitation when looking at the images intrigue me but also the boring and clean touch that some of the works had at first sight, their 'illusory smooth aesthetic' (Lisa Contag). 'Dismissing the dominant pictorial regime', the organizers write about the exhibition that was curated by Catherine David, the images 'preserve an openness and indeterminacy that precludes reducing them to a description or illustration of a specific reality' (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, "The Blind Spot"). The photographs ask for contextualization, but do not dictate it, they motivate recontextualizations instead; as Catherine David sums up: 'what an image is about is not necessarily visible in it'.<sup>105</sup>

Photographs can re-establish a connection to things, events, places and times that remain invisible or have been forgotten. They can furthermore proactively stage absences, which in turn motivate a range of empathic readings. I would like to focus on the openness and equivocality of the photograph, next to the feeling of absences and invisibilities that it evokes, by turning to selected photographs of Thabiso Sekgala's *Homeland* series (2011) and David Goldblatt's *Intersections Intersected* (2008) and *The Structure of Things Then* (1998).

Rather than deciding over a photograph's representability and indexicality of memory or a past event, I would like to reflect on physical and/or emotional presences and absences, the 'moving' qualities of the image.<sup>106</sup> Questions of revisiting, remediating, recycling or repairing the past keep contemporary photographers busy and there seems to be an ongoing interest in memory, recycling material and place in

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<sup>105</sup> In Andrea Hilgenstock, "Kuratorin Catherine David über 'A Blind Spot'" (interview).

<sup>106</sup> See Mieke Bal's "Double Movement".

contemporary photography, particularly in the Global South: the 9<sup>th</sup> Panafrican photography biennial *Rencontres de Bamako* in 2011/12 presented, for instance, under the header ‘Pour un monde durable/ For a sustainable world’, a range of photographic projects that were in some way or the other concerned with the afterlife of things and former structures, the in/visibility of relics and remnants from a past ranging into the present, from urban ruins to rural landscapes and mundane material objects. Many of Goldblatt’s and Sekgala’s photos are likewise occupied with the memories and traces that South African landscapes and cityscapes carry as well as their shifting visibility. They call on absences, the interplay and entanglement of place and site, journey and arrival, past and present. As in every post-colonial society ‘land’ is never only just there, building the ground for action, but always accompanied by an aura of contestation, secrecy or uncanniness.



Fig. 36. Thabiso Sekgala: ‘Homeland 1’. 2011. Colour photograph.

The first photograph of Sekgala’s *Homeland* series (fig. 36) shows an old house in the winter evening sun. At first sight we notice that it is located in a rather deserted and flat area (though the lower right corner of the image displays a shadow of possibly the neighbouring house). Looking closer, we realize that it is possible to look through the windows and out again at the backside of the house. Windows are cracked. The place seems abandoned. The warm and homely light contrasts the weird feeling of

emptiness and uninhabitation, coupled with an almost nostalgic gaze of the camera, an outlook on that which is no more. Then again does the white ‘fast food’ tag on the ochre wall appear rather fresh and the gated doors and cardboard filled windows might point towards the fact that someone is actually (still) living and working there. We seem to feel that the house has changed functions and owners and past and present uses are manifest in the image. It is an invitation to see in the image that which is not readily visible, to see an absence.<sup>107</sup>



Fig. 37. David Goldblatt: ‘Stalled Municipal Housing Scheme, Kwezinaledi’. Lady Grey, Eastern Cape. 5 August 2006. Colour photograph.

Figure 37 is a similar photograph by David Goldblatt showing another housing arrangement, the settlement of approximately 40 same-model houses in the Eastern Cape. The construction site looks deserted leaving it unclear whether the houses will or have ever been inhabited. We don’t know if they suffer from a past incident or wait for a future to come. The title brings light to the question: Nobody has ever lived or is going to live there. Construction work has long stopped. It is a ghost town that has

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<sup>107</sup> As the Market Photo Workshop writes in a press release for ‘Homeland’, Sekgala often takes landscape images of things he has noticed have changed, ‘of cultivated fields that now lay bare, of spaces once occupied, now no longer’.

only ever been inhabited by apartheid segregation policies, one of the many failed resettlement projects that overlooked basic needs for infrastructure and farming of the communities to settle there. The image negotiates the notion of oversight in multiple ways, capturing at the same time that which is ignored and that, which cannot be overlooked for its mere physical presence, as well as the missing life – human and nonhuman – filling the emptiness. ‘Goldblatt is like our social conscious’, South African critic Mary Corrigan (3) writes, ‘ensuring we don’t forget what came before and thus reminding us that little has changed’.

Though the act of making visible traditionally unnoticed or forgotten structures (like a ruin of a farmhouse, an old fence, or the remains of lavatories) points towards and visualizes former colonial apartheid segregation politics and land ownership conflicts, the images do more. They deliberately play with our structures of seeing our and other’s surroundings. Looking at the photographs we feel that something else than what we see is at stake in the place displayed. We see its memory not only as remnants of the past still present, but also as evolving in the present and still constituting it. Okwui Enwezor writes about Goldblatt’s work: ‘While his photographic vision always apprehends a constantly shifting, evolving landscape, it nevertheless seeks to remind the viewer that even when constructed in the present tense, the landscape has memory’ (33). The same is true for many of Sekgala’s photographs who describes his work as ‘the culmination of the exploration of memory, place and interrelated self-imagining. (...) With subtlety and sensitivity I consider how people develop place related identities out of so notorious a past and the complex ways in which people develop nostalgia for histories that could be considered illegitimate’.

Such a history is called upon in the whole *Homeland* series: the title recalls the apartheid regime’s ‘bantustan’ (later homeland) policy, one of the milestones of an institutionalized racist segregation in South Africa, dividing Black South Africans into ten (partly invented) population groups and allocating land to each of them. Sekgala negotiates the presence and memory of the notion of home-land in his photographs by depicting, in a similar manner to Goldblatt, structures that live on, reused and transformed, and whose former function might seem absurd or out of place. This leaves the viewer with a strange feeling of absence despite an overt visible presence, or with a feeling of the presence of something that is not visible in the field of view,

but nevertheless there. *Homeland 7* (fig. 38) shows an open farm or other property gate. We don't know where it leads and whether it is still in use. Did someone just get out or in or is the gate just open all the time, as it no longer serves as boundary? Who and what was it supposed to keep in and out? Again, the image communicates with its viewers, asking of them to think beyond and prior to the gate that shows itself in the image. The figure of the gate is and has been a loaded one in South Africa, coupled with the still paradox discourses of safety and compartmentalization. Symbolizing the difficult question of land ownership and the ongoing land reform process, the gate has been a witness to many changes in South African politics, reminding also of an ongoing legacy of colonial apartheid policies. Centrally arranged in Sekgala's photograph, the gate builds a boundary between that which is to come and that which was. We don't know whether we look from a position inside or outside of a property, whether we are looking back to where we just came from or are just about to enter another place. We also don't know whether this gate still has any function to fulfil.



Fig. 38. Thabiso Sekgala: 'Homeland 7'. 2011. Colour photograph.

Both Goldblatt and Sekgala are occupied with the simultaneous presence and absence of pasts, abandoned places, or unused objects, what we could call the memorialization of the mundane. The Market Photo Workshop calls Sekgala's *Homeland* 'a series of monuments- to life, to time, to the lives that are lived there. It is a monument to individual memories and collective singularities'.



Fig. 39. David Goldblatt: 'Lavatory seats on the veld: the remains of the Frankfort Resettlement Camp'. Ciskei. 9 July 1990. Black-and-white photograph.



Fig. 40. David Goldblatt: 'Remains of long-drop lavatories built for the "closer settlement" of Frankfort, Eastern Cape. The 5000 members of the black farming community of Mgwali were to have been forcibly removed and resettled here after their land was declared a "black spot" by the apartheid government in 1983. However the people of Mgwali resisted strongly and in 1986 the removal scheme was dropped. The lavatories were gradually stripped of their usable building materials by people in the area and all that is left now are concrete bases over some 1500 anatomically shaped holes in the veld. 22 February 2006'. Frankfort, Eastern Cape. 2006. Colour photograph.



Goldblatt has repeatedly said about photography that it monumentalizes things as we go along. His idea behind a motif has always been to photograph something before it disappears.<sup>108</sup> He also often revisits the sites of his photographs, as in the ‘Frankfort lavatories’ series where he photographed the planned Frankfort resettlement camp in 1983, 1990 and 2006. With the fall of apartheid he gradually added information on little posts to his photographs. These short, revealing background stories behind the image, written in a similarly non-sensationalist tone as the visual language of his photos, could not all be told before. ‘The irreducible minimum remained’, he noted down about the lavatories in 1983. In 2006 he added a whole lot more background information on the resettlement project in the image’s caption, highlighting the long and eventually successful resistance of the black farming community that ended the resettlement venture. The remaining reminders then not only commemorate apartheid segregation policy but these abandoned lavatories are also witnesses to the continuous struggle and strength of the affected black communities who fought back.

Okwui Enwezor (“Indeterminate Structure” 30) writes that Goldblatt’s photos are ‘analytical (...) examinations of colonial and apartheid spatial practices’, views of the building and unbuilding of structures. Goldblatt captures the surfeit, the ubiquity of colonial and apartheid monuments. His work casts light on the overseen sites of everyday post/apartheid entanglements of places, ideologies, land, people, and objects that matter to them. Joseph Gergel of the New Museum in New York that featured the two images (fig. 39 and 40) in the exhibition *Intersections Intersected* in 2009 writes: ‘Unlike the tradition of many documentary photographers who capture the “decisive moment”, Goldblatt’s interest lies in the routine existence of a particular time in history’. A similar observation of ‘routine existence’ and sheer timeless, eventless continuity, is made by Enwezor (32) when he writes that Goldblatt’s images ‘tend to veer towards the eventless, (...) the fundamental avoidance of incident’.

The unsensationalist in Goldblatt’s work points towards a silent continuity and weaving of temporalities rather than to a stillness. It is a welcomed addition to the memorialization policy of most organized heritage work in South Africa that almost solely seems to be focused on incidents (‘The Gugulethu Seven’; ‘16 June 1976’), and pars-pro-toto-representations (freedom fighter statues, Hector Pieterse Museum).

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<sup>108</sup> David Goldblatt in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist, 14 October 2012 during the ‘Memory Marathon’ at the Serpentine Gallery.

Whenever he relates to incidents in history, Goldblatt does it in a very unique way. His photograph of Rockey Street, part of *TJ - The Johannesburg Photographs*, a joint publication with Ivan Vladislavić's *Double Negative* (see think box III), is entitled 'It was on 16 June 1976...'. The reference to the Soweto student uprising in 1976 against Afrikaans as sole language of instruction in schools (see the preceding chapter) is not made overtly visible in the image. We get an idea from the title and, searching the photograph, we eventually find what we might have overlooked before: 'June 16' is sprayed on a dustbin on the right brink of the photo.<sup>109</sup>



Fig. 41. David Goldblatt: 'It was on 16 June 1976 that the students of Soweto schools marched in protest against being compulsorily taught in Afrikaans, Rockey Street, Bellevue'. 28 December 1980.

This recalls Kemang Wa Lehulere's question about the role and potential of the writing on walls during apartheid: What did people write? Here is an example of the ways in which commemoration inscribed itself in South African landscapes, even under apartheid – the photograph after all dates back to 1980. We don't know when exactly the graffiti has been made and for how long 'June 16' has managed to remind passers-by of the events in Soweto that heralded the change that was to come years

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<sup>109</sup> See Stefan Helgesson's article "Johannesburg Sighted" on the interplay of text and image, absence and presence, invisibility and visibility in *Double Negative* and *TJ*.

later. What is safe, though, is that Goldblatt's recording of it continues its presence in cultural memory.<sup>110</sup>

### **Talking absences**

The act of looking at photographs realizes and visualizes the absence of a past in the present. Here we are back with both Bennett's and Mbembe's thoughts of the artwork in a time of entanglement and the ways in which it can sustain subtle sensation. This is also applicable to the photograph in its snapshot version. All photographs discussed here let us take our time with those things and structures we would normally overlook or ignore. They give us time with the Other, the past and the absent, and recognize, as Bennett (74) writes, that the past 'is figured as the environing world' that shapes the actors present. In its capacity to clip and to store a moment in the past, the photograph becomes a memorial (Marita Sturken). Juxtaposing the different memories in and of a place, it can bring forth moments where memory reflects on itself. What is the reference in the image, then, that makes viewers pause? It is an apparent emptiness, the feeling of a memory with a missing monument, or the gesture monumentalizing the mundane, forgotten or overlooked.

The question following this observation is how and when can memorial space build up or maintain the dynamic needed for sustaining interest and involvement in another's past? Looking back at the tourist snapshots, their play with absences is not necessarily an intended absence as in Goldblatt's or Sekgala's works. It is nevertheless a 'talking' absence in retrospective, especially when read together with the other images whose sphere of influence – the art world – is more clearly marked as outreaching medium. It can retrospectively lead to interesting reflections on part of the tourist photographer, consisting in a confrontation with the realization of why one takes which snapshot and why this goes often unquestioned. This points towards the fact that there are exceptions, breaks, or interruptions of a foreseeable photographic behaviour on a tourist trip that even surprise the photographers themselves.

A confrontation with unpicturesque sights and remainders, discarded or 'empty places' can motivate the vacationer to break with her sightseeing and recording routines. Looking again at the snapshots as oversights makes the whole field of view suddenly disclose itself differently. It thereby comes close to the work

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<sup>110</sup> The paragraph about Goldblatt's '16 June' has been added to the essay after its publication.

that Goldblatt's photographs ask of their viewers: an orientation, a movement in space, a curiosity for the mundane and invisible, a readiness to accept the influence of the latent in a place and a situation. It is a move away from long conserved ready-made stories of 'the South African Other' and enables encounters prior to the touristic lens of otherness – motivated through absences like the absence of a photographic view or landmark.

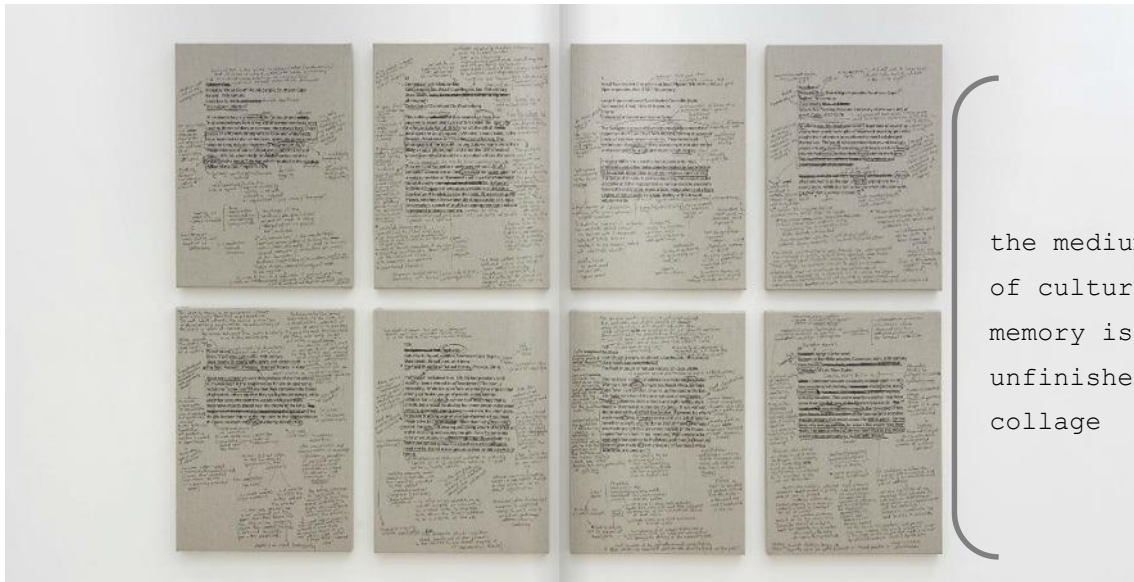
### **Conclusion: Photographs stage absences and activate the imagination**

The article argued for a productive quality of absences – voids and *oversights* – in the visual work of cultural memory. Photographs, both professional and amateur snapshots, can give a presence to absences. We can decipher absences when they are marked or staged in some way, for example accompanied by a sign or plaque stating 'here was once ...' or '... used to live/ take place here'. Just as we sometimes do not remember or even notice the monumental, we are attracted by what is *not* there because it piques our curiosity and asks us to use our imagination – both when encountering actual sites and when looking at images. But what is it that is kept present in absences? It might be that what got lost, or something that reminds of a traumatic incident no one wants to be reminded of and that lacks recognition. At the same time it can take the form of an irreducible remainder that some object, person, or incident has left and that does not readily reveal itself to its visitor and therefore remains overseen but overlooked. To follow what is not recognized, or what is discarded, *othered*, makes us perceive some of the work that memory is confronted with.

I tried to show how photographs as circulating actors actively set an absence into scene. Through the attention it gathers, a photograph can make her viewers aware that it casts light on only a certain part of the whole scene. When it comes to memory work and especially the recognition of an Other and others' memories, a break in usual routines and rhythms and especially the act of taking time, of pausing, is of productive importance to allow room for memory, relating to it and keeping it alive. When the body doesn't know where to look, the imagination is activated to fill the visible voids.

THINK BOX IV

Shared visual topology of memory work: similar forms make relations across inscribing and inscribed spaces



the medium of cultural memory is an unfinished collage

Fig. 42. Meleko Mokgosi: 'Walls of Casbah'.

Acts of inscribing and overwriting in public space or at institutionalized sites



STRATEGY

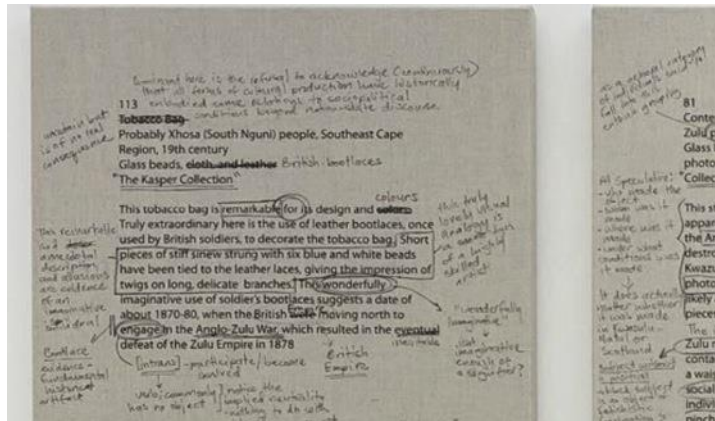


Fig. 43. Detail from Meleko Mokgosi's 'Walls of Casbah II': 'Object 113 Tobacco Bag uncertain but is of no real consequence'.

(How) are mnemonic forms, the art installation, the personal note, the mural, the graffiti, the 'wall of remembrance', ... transvisually related?

## 7. Conclusion

I'd say that memory is, above all else, a question of responsibility with respect to something of which one is often not the author. Moreover I believe that one only truly becomes a human being to the degree that one is capable of answering to what one is not the direct author of, and to the person with whom one has, seemingly, nothing in common. There is, truly, no memory except in the body of commands and demands that the past not only transmits to us but also requires us to contemplate. I suppose the past obliges us to reply in a responsible manner. So there is no memory except in the assignment of such a responsibility.

(Achille Mbembe in Olivier Mongin 131)

### Research question and findings

This thesis has asked what we can learn about the work of cultural memory when we start to follow the mundane, ordinary accounts and reactions that stem from tourists' encounters with sites of memory. The study was a mixed-methods investigation of the life and agency of tourist snapshots at sites of memory. I have grounded the analysis in an understanding of memory work in actor-network terms as a responsive act of people and things, a work that is entangled, relational and traceable.

I have shown that the actual *dynamics* of memory, the ways and means which make memories live on throughout the present and in the future, depend on and are composed by the mundane creative *appropriations* by people that are to some extent *afforded* by the objects and sites of memory themselves. Furthermore I have indicated that this mutual scene of affordance and appropriation is often accompanied by different modes of *oversights*: the interplay of visibility and absence in both tourist picturing practices at sites of memory and the resulting snapshots.

The main contribution of this thesis has been its conceptual and methodological work that culminated in a new approach to the dynamics of memory by drawing from central concepts in actor-network theory (ANT). I will in this concluding chapter demonstrate how the developed framework offers important clues for the overall field of memory studies and visual culture studies. I will also turn to open questions and possible limitations of the methodology and the thesis design.

Throughout the preceding chapters I have provided examples for the work and life of the tourist snapshot at sites of memory. Chapter 2 has shown, among many other things, that the act of zooming in, allowed by the digital photograph posted online, lets us disentangle and trace previously unnoticed visual dynamics in the snapshots. Chapter 3 exposed the snapshot as mediator of memory in the Latourian sense: the tourist appropriation of a site of memory in the form of a snapshot translates the visited scene in a new account. It thereby also slightly transforms the mediated memories at the site and in doing so actualizes what a mediated memory has to say in the present. Chapter 4 turned to the family photo shoebox with snapshots of the annual summer holiday at a Danish beach and showed that we also ‘accidentally’ commemorate difficult pasts as oversights in our mundane ways of holidaying. The Atlantikwall bunkers, though rarely noticed, feature as useful props or silent guards in these snapshots and are given a presence through the continuous memory work of the photograph. Examples in Chapters 5 and 6 both highlight this act of giving presence to absences that the tourist snapshots and art photographs perform.

My findings result in a range of consequences for the study of memory today: (i) they support the current trend to rethink anthropocentrism and to turn to materiality in the study of memory, (ii) they contribute to literatures which highlight the role of mundane uses of the past, and (iii) they indicate the ongoing need for cross-disciplinary research on the visual and on memory. In the following paragraphs I go into more detail with regard to these three points of rethinking the material, the ordinary and particularly the methodology by returning to the research questions that have been raised in the Introduction. When discussing the methodology, I will reflect on the actual contribution of ANT for the study of visual culture and its entanglement with memory work: the *transvisual* approach of this thesis. I will highlight the visual form and practice of graffiti as a recurrent traceable, visual pattern in my case studies. In a last step I confront the two meanings of the term responsibility – as correspondence in actor-network terms and as the ethical act of engaging with and answering to others’ memories described in Mbembe’s above quote – and relate my findings to the erstwhile research proposal: How can sites of memory intervene into a colonial cultural memory?

### **Rethinking the role of materiality**

Despite the immense body of literature on the subject of Cultural Memory, I have introduced and followed my own notion of cultural memory to underline the participation of both objects and people in this venture. It is a notion that deliberately brackets possible disparate influences of certain group constellations. Though this approach can be rightfully declined or at least criticized as being limited, it proved helpful to meet emerging memory work for reasons that will be outlined in the following paragraphs.

Regarding the manifold relations between people and things in memory work, the question raised in this thesis was three-sided: what do people do with memory stuff, but also what does the stuff make people do with it and what does it do when there is no visitor around? As all chapters have shown, the human and the material are entangled in memory work and at sites of memory. People make use of material, mediated memories in manifold ways and the new mediations stemming from the recorded uses of the past – material appropriations themselves – let us refer back to the work of the site. I have shown that the mediated memories at sites of memory in the form of proper things also undergo transformation when there is no human around. The look and composition of the bunkers, for instance, is immensely dependent on the weather, the work of the wind and the sea, and the exhibition walls in the church in Soweto are dependent on the light coming in through the windows, the durability of nails, wire and frames as well as the strength of the marker's ink used for the inscription.

I have asked furthermore how sites of memory materialise in and motivate the crafting of further objects of memory like the snapshots that potentially offer a changeable materiality as well. The study has shown that there are certain *patterning*s of sites of memory, which seem to motivate and enable involvement in particular ways, what I have subsumed under the notion of *affordance*. The exhibition walls of 'The Story of Soweto' at Regina Mundi Church as well as David Goldblatt's photographs, for instance, have an *unfinished* patterning where visible gaps and voids afford appropriation. The bunkers along the Danish west coast have an *ordinary, unremarkable* patterning, which, because of its ordinariness, 'masks' the once troublesome functions of the material traces and affords *other* appropriations. The revaluation of the bunkers in ordinary practices and their very different uses that are



rarely connected to actual commemoration lets the bunkers live on as silent remainders in snapshots.

These findings show that one central outcome of an ANT-inspired study of cultural memory is the question of *changeability*, which, as the individual cases have proved, is a precondition for dynamic memory work. Changeability of course, again, involves its more negative side, the susceptibility to (malicious) manipulation. Cultural memory is constantly shaping, taking form, making itself visible or invisible; it is transforming and changing. What differs is the ability of sites of memory to enter a dynamic work of cultural memory, to promote, enable and enact, or simply to make visible this change. The individual chapters have argued for the fruitful inquiry into the shifting modes of changeability via the patternings of certain sites. Changeability can thereby refer to different things as illustrated by the two cases introduced: some sites are left to themselves and therefore are afforded changeability (the bunkers); other sites, like the ‘wall of remembrance’ in Soweto, are designed to be open to visible intervention and thereby afford change. This point is of importance as most built memorials are actively preserved from changing visibly and materially (as this change is considered negative – and most vandalism admittedly is), and prevented from developing and following their own mode of changeability.

The patternings underline that cultural memory is an act of *collective appropriation* of the sites and their different visitors. And they confirm the importance of the mundane, ordinary uses of memorials or remains from difficult pasts.

### **Rethinking the role of the mundane**

I have claimed that Memory Studies should look more into *how* memorialization projects as unfinished and generally open cultural communications – memorials built to sustain sensation and an interest in the past as well as an interest in the role of the past for the present and the future – are received and worked with, how they are appropriated by ordinary people in, for instance, ordinary snapshots. The research outline that I chose to meet this challenge is a reverse way of reading memorial sites, namely through its materialized appropriations by visitors, by international and domestic tourists. Another way I could have chosen is to draw on the vast body of visual research methods (Pink) and document appropriation as process and practice at the observable scenes of encounters. I was mainly interested in appropriation as

account and manifest inscription that, as it can be externalized and thereby shared with others, allows the researcher to follow its tracing activity.

The question I asked was: How do we ‘make something our own’, take something out of an encounter and an experience with mediated memories, and form new individual memories? The answer, given in part by an engagement with Wa Lehulere’s murals and Mokgosi’s plates, is simply: inscription. We inscribe ourselves into the encountered site or we inscribe our encounters further in the world, for instance by taking a snapshot and uploading it to our Flickr stream on the Internet. The questions following from this were: how do these appropriations of mediated memories – the snapshots – bind other actors and draw them towards them? What do visual products as visual objects of memory tell us about the associations they make and the network they create, support or even dissolve?

I have met these questions with Ariella Azoulay’s concept of ‘the event of photography’ that highlights the infinite series of encounters afforded by photographs, and her idea of the photograph as platform which opens and maps debates between actors that were unforeseeable at the time the photograph was taken. The juxtaposition of different snapshots in Chapters 3 to 6 showed that the interplay of presence and absence as well as visibility and invisibility is central to the work of cultural memory and entangled in manifold ways with the tourist’s photographic acts. As a consequence of this research observation I developed the concept of *oversight* to describe modes of overlooking memorials, of picturing memorials as out-of-sight, of productively staging absences, and of overlooking the snapshots themselves.

We can conclude that the visitor snapshots are proper actors of memory. They actively remember themselves as they do not only record the visible changes of sites of memory but they also creatively feed overlooked sites (or the fact that some sites or snapshots are worth overlooking) into the visual field of cultural memory.

The slightly different ways in which I approached the sites – Soweto’s sites strictly via others and Blaavand beach strictly via my own or my family’s records – makes them of course hardly comparable. Additional studies could look into other tourist snapshots featuring the bunkers to leave the very personal level of this set of material. Nevertheless, the point made was a different one and ties in with van Dijck’s approach in *Mediated Memories* or Annette Kuhn’s memory work in *Family Secrets* where the authors similarly start from their own ‘shoebox memories’. We usually

have the best access to our own photographic souvenirs and holiday memories as well as to the people and things featured in the photographs. This fact makes the researcher's personal realm suitable to explore a unit of analysis – in this case the ordinary tourist snapshot – and to try out methods to engage with the mundane.

### **Rethinking methodologies**

Central to this thesis was the development of a conceptual and methodological framework to grasp local acts of memory, to investigate the net-work of mediated memories at sites, how this material organizes itself, and, particularly, how memorial sites are encountered, used, and further distributed by individual visitors. The developed framework recognized the importance of mundane, ordinary reception – what I have termed a process and product of *creative appropriation* – and integrated studies in visual culture with an actor-network methodology.

I have asked how an analysis of the visual is traceable and assembled in the mundane work of cultural memory. With a mixture of image work and concept work, switching between engagements with gathered material in case studies and the integration and discussion of existing theoretical positions, I have integrated visual culture in an actor-network methodology – and vice versa. The outcome is a cross-disciplinary approach that contributes to the conceptual and methodological toolbox of both memory studies and visual culture studies.

### **ANT and/in the study of visual material**

The work with images – especially with images that do not act as references or visualizations of research (as graphs or a certain type of field photographs do) – has not been central to the work of actor-network theorists. They usually juggle with other entities. ANT might also not be the most suitable method to engage with the visual. But, and this is what I have hopefully shown, in many ways it leads us away from 'image work only' and more to the composition of the visual as field, medium, technique, and technology. Sarah Pink argued already in 2003 ("Interdisciplinary Agendas in Visual Research") for a more collaborative approach to visual research. This is a prevailing issue that the thesis sought to contribute to by meeting the challenge to confront the bias of individual disciplines and unite research of the visual in a new methodological framework inspired by ANT. It thereby makes insights of

other research areas useful for visual culture studies and it develops a *transvisual* analysis with tools from actor-network methodology that does not stop at the level of the shape of the record – as I outlined in Chapter 2. ANT proved helpful as a methodology on two levels:

- It advanced creative *concept work* to operationalize the observation that investigations of cultural memory should look into the entanglement of the human and nonhuman in mnemonic action.
- It offered to my analysis a *tool* to disentangle the circumstances of composition for the different materials investigated in the study. It is not a proper analysis of the shapes of the materials – and it doesn't claim to be one. It is a methodology to mainly accompany, map and reassemble the research *process*.

### **Does the study of the visual also require visual methods?**

Next to rethinking the material and the mundane, this thesis investigated the role of the visual and in particular the production of visual materials such as vernacular photographs in cultural memory work. It has become clear throughout the thesis that the visual is both medium and technique of memory. Visual figurations and the realm of the visual itself work both as important intermediaries that transport views, and as crucial mediators that transform the stuff of memory and thereby maintain it. In Chapter 2, I have argued that acts of memory are entangled, relational and traceable and that they can be approached with a *transvisual* methodology: the zooming in and out of images and the juxtaposition of different visual materials, their content, the scene and acts that brought them to life and the sites of their distribution. I suggested calling the corresponding methodology 'transvisual' – not because I wished to establish a new concept, but to have a 'working term' to think-along that highlights continuously that I am talking about a network of visual associations across the visual and enmeshed with visual practices. The 'trans' indicates the bindings of the three visuals in this sentence.

It is my impression that the increasingly popular branch of visual research methods (Pink; Pink, Kürti, and Alfonso) – the researcher's engagement in (own) visual production – is not per se offering the most suitable methods to study the visual. The outcome is often first and foremost visualizations of research practices

that have to be skilfully integrated into the text or specific outcome of the research. I take it as ‘imposed focus’ that most of the visual material I had co-produced myself during research got lost before I could actually work with it. This was not only a limiting challenge but also a gain: I decided to work exclusively with *other* people’s snapshots or visual products that they would be *willing* to share and in most cases talk about – this also made the ethical question almost obsolete. Snapshots from my own holidays in Chapters 4 and 5 are no exception, as they have not been taken for research purposes and therefore also fall under the category of ‘found holiday snapshots’.

The literature on visual research methods has nevertheless rightfully pointed out two of the main shortcomings of research with and about images. As Sarah Pink writes: ‘In any project a researcher should attend not only to the internal “meanings” of an image, but also to how the image was produced and how it is made meaningful by its viewers’ (186). The claim voiced is that most research that engages with images (other visual material and media are only rarely studied) in some way still focuses on the researcher’s interpretation of the image and its social or cultural implications without engaging with ‘the people’ – anthropology’s main concern. While I fully support this observation (the criticism is also to some extent applicable to the study presented in this thesis) I wish to, after having engaged with the people, invert the argument – and admittedly risk oversimplification: But while social and cultural anthropologists investigate the production and uses of images, the visual materials’ content, shape and the connections it makes across the visual is often disdained or at least not fully fathomed. Methodologies and theoretical frameworks that help us to creatively balance between the two biases are most needed.

### **Tracing the work of the visual – a new visual memory?**

Having rethought the materiality, visibility and methodology of memory work, I have furthermore asked how we can map and make sense of the associations that the visual appropriations such as the snapshot make across the visual.

I have shown that snapshots act as mediators. Thinking back to the original research proposal, this means that they potentially also have the power to change stubborn imaginaries about, and images of, certain ‘tourist destinations’. It is here where the ordinary snapshot as cultural mnemonic actor makes crucial associations

with a broader visual memory of a site. One recurrent visual shape in this thesis has been the graffito. Mieke Bal turns to a graffito on a public wall in Amsterdam to expose interdisciplinary analysis (*The Practice of Cultural Analysis* 4):

[The graffito] is publicly accessible, semantically dense, pragmatically intriguing, visually appealing and insistent, and philosophically profound. Just like poetry. Yet it stubbornly remains a transient thing that can disappear at any moment. (...) It is an exhibit; it is on show; and it shows itself, shows its hand, its presence. And in its capacity as visible exhibit, it exposes itself and what it has to say.

This transient exhibition status characterizes also the visual shape of cultural memory. Building on this thesis' study, we can make sense of the associations of visual forms by turning to what we may call 'participatory graffiti'. I have shown in Chapter 3 that the exhibition walls at Regina Mundi Church act as alternative public forum for people to articulate their thoughts in the form of vernacular graffiti that have an ongoing conversation. In Chapter 4 we met the manifold work of graffiti in its mutual durability and changeability for instance in the two snapshots that feature the bunker with a painted dove.

The work of the graffito – and cultural memory likewise – is formed by acts of ordinary inscription and the possibility of creative overwriting (the peace dove writes over the war that the bunker was involved in). As I wrote in Chapter 3, it is the 'process of reworking, recognizing, and highlighting some details and playing down or leaving out others that characterizes the work of memory and generates a memory assemblage constituted through relational investments and shared mediations'. The possibility to participate and externalize something but also to eternalize oneself by leaving a mark and becoming part, belonging, is crucial for the work of cultural memory, and, thinking back to Meleko Mokgosi's work, such is the possibility to comment, to make a point or to correct. The graffito or the mural, as Kemang Wa Lehulere put it, 'has to live its own life (...) it has to move and be moved by itself as well'. The changeable graffito is not only a form of visual inscription that we find in many a context, but it also stands out due to its *affordance*, its power to attract. It inscribes the possibility for self-inscription into the world.

While this thesis highlighted the potential and positive dynamic of the venture of over/writing at sites of memory, a future study might want to look more into the possible dangers of these observable acts of appropriation and relate more to the ANT

notions of mediator as potential manipulator (van Dijck's reading) and translations as potential betrayal (Crawford).

Pointing beyond the present study, I asked in Chapter 6 how and when memorial space can build up or maintain the dynamic needed for sustaining interest and involvement in another's past. The discussion of the patternings can indeed give clues to designers of memorial sites how to make these sites more affording, or, to recall Musil, how to make them afford other reactions than merely being overlooked. The last chapter already showed that affordance is actively worked into images with the help of intentional absences. For the physical memorial site the question remains whether such affordance can be man-made: Can it be inscribed in a site so that this site 'functions' in a particular way?

An explorative experiment could take the patternings of affording memorial sites in Chapter 2 as starting point to design new 'zones of transaction' (Latour) at existing memorial sites. The answer might not be as simple as to merely allow the drawing of potentially vandalising graffiti, but we have to think of other forms of inscription or the possibility to *experience* inscriptions and the changeability of memorials.

### **Alliances, shortcomings and limitations of the findings and framework**

This thesis contributes to the growing research interest on memory and materiality manifest for instance in the many conference alerts during the last years: 'Materiality, Memory and Cultural Heritage' (Istanbul 2011), 'Things (Re)called: Memory and Materiality Across the Disciplines' (Yale 2014), 'Things to Remember: Materializing Memories in Art and Culture' (Nijmegen 2014), 'Memory and Materialism' (London 2015) – to name but a few. There seem to be new titles appearing on a daily basis so I could not include references to all here and I might even have overlooked a few important books, ventures or journal issues in the final period of writing this dissertation.

By introducing a methodological and conceptual framework inspired by ANT to the study of memory, this thesis also contributed to the late literature in memory studies that called for an understanding and analysis of memory as active, working (Rigney), palimpsestic (Huyssen, Silverman), assemblic (Reading), and moving (Bond et al.). It tried to map this manifold and ongoing composition by highlighting

the role of, and pointing out the insights given by, ordinary materials that people produce in the encounter with mediated memories. Although these records, once externalized online, might be subject to a range of uncontrollable organizing mechanisms (van Dijck), our records and the traces that we leave potentially matter in and as themselves.

It also seems worth highlighting that Bruno Latour's work, above all *Reassembling the Social*, has received increasing attention in the humanities and particular in arts and cultural studies during the last decade (see famously Bennett and Healy's *Assembling Culture*). Latour himself has started a range of initiatives at the interface of art and ANT. I do not see this interest in his work solely as an unquestioned and superfluous academic follower trend but I interpret it first and foremost as indicating an ongoing need to (i) turn away from representation (only) or better: to meet the dynamics of representation from a different angle; (ii) to make sense of the collective through the small acts in small places; and (iii) to understand and even collaborate with the increasing work and influence of, especially, digital technologies and the material devices supported by them.

For a range of both professional and personal reasons this thesis highlighted the research *process* itself. This is also the reason why it was compiled as a partly article-based thesis that first and foremost assembles the development of ideas. I take it that the rather fragmentary and at times seemingly disconnected, non-linear work with the individual cases has proved to be very productive in the end: Not only does this thesis lay bare the actual process of research conducted and the mediation of the encountered and produced material; it also manages to situate the researcher herself in this venture and makes the academic work play its own part in the net-work of cultural memory.

However, this study would have been different, and to some extent probably also stronger and more convincing, had I focused on Regina Mundi Church only, a path I was considering in early 2013. I do not rule out the possibility of another research trip in the future to follow up on this space, to re-connect with people, to re-collect and re-assemble material and recordings that I had lost. This also points towards another shortcoming of this thesis: though highlighting the importance of the act of mundane appropriation, it does not always succeed in paying enough attention to the individual accounts, the opinion of visitors about their snapshots for instance, in



the written text. This was also partly a deliberate choice to not bias again in favour of the human agent and ‘mind’. Still, I could have more skilfully woven more of the gathered material into this thesis. And herein probably also lies the flip side of the otherwise promising aspect of cross-disciplinary research: we do in fact not always fully command each other’s tools. And while my strength might lie in writing the background narration, the foreground and how I embed the material of others could be improved. I take this as a chance and motivation to go on with some of the work I have started.

### **Roads ahead: Re-humanizing ANT? From correspondence to responsibility**

In this last step I take the notion of responsiveness of the memory-site-as-actor-network further and juxtapose it with the originally sketched narrative of the thesis: the continuity of a ‘colonial mind-set’ in the postcolonial tourist practice of the Western tourist in the Global South. In many ways, Soweto has made it! It has succeeded to attract visitors’ interest because of its history and the stories its people have to tell, it doesn’t (solely) cater to an exoticist gaze for the poor Other. Stubborn images lose their (centre) stage in subtle ways and they lose it through active interventions – as illustrated in Meleko Mokgosi’s work with museum plaques.

What happens when others’ pasts are interwoven with ‘our’ pasts in remediations? How does the ongoing movement and transformation of cultural memory eventually impact on a current state of coloniality? Can we locate a change in stubborn imaginaries? Building on my research at the Regina Mundi Church and my work with the many visitor appropriations of ‘The Story of Soweto’, I postulate that the meeting with others’ histories may rehistoricize places that have been mainly travelled as ‘timeless spaces of pleasure’. This indicates the potential of the encounter with another’s history to reduce stereotypical consumption, the tourist’s longing for the exotic Other, and to make room for a largely ignored, shared history of colonialism and the shared and ongoing – entangled – time of coloniality. In this context Sarah Nuttall talks about entanglement as ‘points of intersection in unexpected ways’ of ‘those sites in which what was once thought of as separate – identities, spaces, histories – come together’ (11).

‘The Story of Soweto’ is precisely such a site, which, when accessed with an ANT-inspired methodology, shows how it *assigns responsibility* – following Mbembe

in the above quote. If we carefully ‘re-humanize’ ANT, the act of tracing and tracking cultural memory ‘may end up’, as Latour writes himself, ‘in a shared definition of a common world what I have called a collective’ (*Reassembling* 247). How does cultural memory as the effect of collective appropriation involve the meeting with others in memory work? Rahel Jaeggi, whose discussion of the notion of appropriation formed the basis of my study, argues that the challenge of appropriation lies in making productive the concept’s tension between ‘ownness’ [Eigenheit] and ‘otherness’ [Fremdheit]:

The aspiration for a succeeding appropriation of world and Self would then consist in the act of adopting the world as one’s own, without taking it as already being owned, and it would imply the urge to shape this world and the own life without assuming a total power of disposition.<sup>111</sup>

I argue that the walls of ‘The Story of Soweto’ that managed to get a life of their own motivate this ‘urge to shape this world’ and make sure that the shaping remains a collective act. In the introductory quote of this Conclusion, Achille Mbembe makes a point similar to Jaeggi’s about memory itself by saying that it is a question of responsibility towards something of which one is often not the author – what one does not already own. This corresponds to the tourist who encounters other’s memories at memorial sites and is urged – depending on the sites’ pattern – to answer to these mediated memories.

ANT has proved a suitable toolbox to observe, describe and investigate acts of adopting mediated memories without assuming prior constellations of ownership in these appropriations. I have approached responsibility in actor-network terms as correspondence of humans and objects to highlight the responsiveness of the nonhuman material in this venture, but the material analysed – tourists’ mundane appropriations – still revealed another form of responsibility that resonates in Mbembe’s and Jaeggi’s notion. Disentangling the sites and mediated memories of ‘The Story of Soweto’s walls through their many appropriations in snapshots revealed that we can indeed find many acts of responsibility in the sense of showing oneself responsible for a mutual past in visitors’ comments – both from domestic and international tourists. Their visualizations furthermore highlight and save the

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<sup>111</sup> ‘Der Anspruch gelingender Welt- und Selbstaneignung bestünde dann nämlich darin, sich die Welt zu Eigen zu machen, ohne dass sie einem immer schon zu Eigen wäre, und sie und das eigene Leben gestalten zu wollen, ohne dabei von totaler Verfügungsmacht auszugehen’.



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- Fig. 9. Chris Deatruck (taylor\_90): 'Apartheid Photo Gallery in Regina Mundi Church', 15 January 2009.  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/15163844@N00/3256912620/in/photolist-5XJk1c-5XJde8-5XJhFk-5XNwDS-5XNv3C-5XNvS5-5XNyYo-5XNyfC-5XJecP-5XJovZ/> (12 October 2015) Courtesy Chris Deatruck.
- Fig. 10. Author's 'text copy' of fig. 9
- Fig. 11. Screenshot of Enzo RSA's TripAdvisor post. Picture 'Write Your Name in History'. 11 July 2014 posted under his review 'A holy place with lots of history' (captured and last accessed 18 February 2015).  
[http://www.tripadvisor.de/SavedPhotos-g563950-i103362435-Soweto\\_Greater\\_Johannesburg\\_Gauteng.html\\_Courtesy\\_Enzo\\_RSA](http://www.tripadvisor.de/SavedPhotos-g563950-i103362435-Soweto_Greater_Johannesburg_Gauteng.html_Courtesy_Enzo_RSA).

- Fig. 12. Screenshot of Sbu Dladla's (@sirdlala) Instagram post from 4 January 2015. Retrieved via pikore (29 July 2015) [http://www.pikore.com/m/890271021763055720\\_1340775179](http://www.pikore.com/m/890271021763055720_1340775179). Courtesy Sbu Dladla.
- Fig. 13. Kevin DeGaut: 'Messages scrawled in the photo gallery of the church', August 16, 2005. <http://sedativegunk.files.wordpress.com/2005/08/soweto-regina-mundi-church-scrawl-in-photo-gallery.jpg> (16 January 2014). Courtesy Kevin DeGaut.
- Fig. 14. Patrick Delahanty: 'You Are in Our Hearts', Regina Mundi Church, 17 June 2010, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/4-5-43-pat/4756725924/> (16 January 2014). Courtesy Patrick Delahanty.
- Fig. 15 Keeley Kennahan: 'Soweto Uprising Exhibit at Regina Mundi Church', 11 October 2011, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/hippityhoohah/6312996665/> (16 January 2014). Courtesy Swahili-Keeley Photography.
- Fig. 16. Jean Liou: 'Fallen Heroes (Mandela & Sisulu à terre)', Regina Mundi, Soweto, Johannesburg, Gauteng, Afrique du Sud – 2012, 21 July 2012 <https://www.flickr.com/photos/tarkastad/7615833040> (5 November 2015). Courtesy Jean Liou.
- Fig. 17. Dai Kurokawa: 'Former South African President Nelson Mandela in hospital'. EPA caption: 'A portrait of former South African President Nelson Mandela rests against the wall as messages written by visitors are seen on the wall at Regina Mundi church in Soweto township, a flashpoint during the anti-apartheid struggle, in Johannesburg, South Africa, on Sunday'. <http://www.epa.eu/human-interest-photos/people-photos/former-south-african-president-nelson-mandela-in-hospital-photos-50886279> (23 October 2015) Courtesy Dai Kurokawa and epa/scanpix.
- Fig. 18. Kemang Wa Lehulere: 'Remembering the Future of a hole as a verb 2.1.' Detail from installation view, 2012, white chalk on black paint, 273 x 1570 cm. In *Some Deleted Scenes Too* 21-22. Courtesy the artist.
- Fig. 19. 'Building sand castles', scanned analogue photograph, 1984. Courtesy the author.
- Fig. 20. 'Portrait', scanned analogue photograph, 1984. Courtesy the author.
- Fig. 21. 'Sunbathing', scanned analogue photograph, July 1992. Courtesy the author.
- Fig. 22. 'Posing on the bunker', scanned analogue photograph, 1993. Courtesy the author.
- Fig. 23. 'Family Triptych', scanned analogue photographs, July 1990. Courtesy the author.
- Fig. 24. 'Sister Triptych', scanned analogue photographs, 2002. Courtesy the author.

- Fig. 25. 'Monkey bunker', scanned analogue photograph, 2002. Courtesy the author.
- Fig. 26. 'Discovering the bunker mule', scanned analogue photograph, 1996. Courtesy the author.
- Fig. 27. 'Photographing the bunker mule', digital photograph, 2007. Courtesy the author.
- Fig. 28. 'At Hector Pieterse Memorial'. 11 July 2012. Courtesy Alessandro Ioppolo.
- Fig. 29. IMG\_2284-2291. Photographs taken at the Hector Pieterse Memorial. 11 July 2012. Courtesy Alessandro Ioppolo.
- Fig. 30. 'Blåvand', 21 June 2015. Courtesy Peter Hecker.
- Fig. 31. Ismail Farouk: 'Famous Photo Site', 11 July 2006. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ismailfarouk/924134756/> (5 November 2015). Courtesy Ismail Farouk.
- Fig. 32. Jess May: 'Hector Pieterse – Wall Where he was Shot' retrieved via Flickr (11 January 2014, source no longer available).
- Fig. 33. Bruno Latour: '*Figure 11.7. Sur cette photo on ne voit rien de net*'. 1993. In: Bruno Latour, "Le 'Pédofil' de Boa Vista – Montage Photo-Philosophique" 185-186. Courtesy Bruno Latour.
- Fig. 34. Ryan (riun79): 'Student Uprising Memorial'. 5 January 2009. Colour photograph. Flickr. Courtesy the artist. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/riun79/3334841189/> (5 November 2015).
- Fig. 35. Fiona Henderson: 'Desmond Tutu's house'. 24 December 2009. Colour photograph, Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/fifikins/4213968204>. Courtesy Fiona Henderson.
- Fig. 36. Thabiso Sekgala: 'Homeland 1'. 2011. Colour photograph. Courtesy the artist.
- Fig. 37. David Goldblatt, 'Stalled Municipal Housing Scheme, Kwezinaledi', Lady Grey, Eastern Cape, 5 August 2006. Colour photograph. In Garb, *Homelands Landmarks* 41. Courtesy the artist and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.
- Fig. 38. Thabiso Sekgala, 'Homeland 7', 2011. Colour photograph. Courtesy the artist.
- Fig. 39. David Goldblatt, 'Lavatory seats on the veld: the remains of the Frankfort Resettlement Camp', Ciskei, 9 July 1990. Black and white photograph. In Goldblatt, *The Structure of Things Then* 59. Courtesy the artist and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.
- Fig. 40. David Goldblatt, 'Remains of long-drop lavatories', Frankfort, Eastern Cape. 22 February 2006. Colour photograph. In Garb, *Homelands Landmarks* 47. Courtesy the artist and Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg.

- Fig. 41. David Goldblatt: 'It was on 16 June 1976 that the students of Soweto schools marched in protest against being compulsorily taught in Afrikaans, Rocky Street, Bellevue', 28 December 1980. Published in *TJ – The Johannesburg Photographs*, a joint publication with Ivan Vladislavić's *Double Negative* <http://www.digitalcollections.lib.uct.ac.za/collection/islandora-1880> (25 October 2015) Courtesy the artist.
- Fig. 42. Meleko Mokgosi: Walls of Casbah II, Stevenson catalogue No. 81, *Kings County*, 23, available via issuu: [http://issuu.com/stevensonctandjhb/docs/kings\\_county\\_catalogue\\_issuu?e=9663888/9902594](http://issuu.com/stevensonctandjhb/docs/kings_county_catalogue_issuu?e=9663888/9902594). Courtesy the artist.
- Fig. 43. Meleko Mokgosi: Walls of Casbah II, Stevenson catalogue No. 81, *Kings County*, 23, available via issuu: [http://issuu.com/stevensonctandjhb/docs/kings\\_county\\_catalogue\\_issuu?e=9663888/9902594](http://issuu.com/stevensonctandjhb/docs/kings_county_catalogue_issuu?e=9663888/9902594). Courtesy the artist.
- Fig. 44. Sbu Dladla @sirdladla: '#ReginaMundi gallery and the story of #Soweto' 4 January 2015. Instagram. Retrieved via pikore [http://www.pikore.com/m/890271779724120187\\_1340775179](http://www.pikore.com/m/890271779724120187_1340775179) (6 November 2015).

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Frauke Wiegand

Berlin/Copenhagen in November 2015

## **Abstract**

### **Tracing Cultural Memory**

#### **Holiday snapshots at sites of memory in an actor-network perspective**

We encounter, relate to and make use of our past and that of others in multifarious and increasingly mobile ways. Tourism is one of the main paths for encountering sites of memory. This thesis examines tourists' creative appropriations of sites of memory – the objects and future memories inspired by their encounters – to address a question that thirty years of ground-breaking research into memory has not yet sufficiently answered: What can we learn about the dynamics of cultural memory by examining mundane, ordinary accounts of touristic encounters with sites of memory?

This thesis analyses tourists' snapshots and outlines their *tracing* activity in cultural memory. In the first part, I draw on central concepts of actor-network theory (ANT) for a cross-disciplinary methodology to comprehend the situated work of the collective appropriation of mediated memories in the tourist practice. Chapter 2 applies the ANT concepts of 'entanglement', 'relationality', and 'traceability' to read snapshots taken at 'The Story of Soweto' exhibition in Soweto's Regina Mundi Church. Chapter 3 analyses other tourist snapshots from that site and underscores the snapshot's afterlife and agency as an active mediator of memory.

In the second part, I develop a crucial observation with regard to collective appropriations in tourists' photographic acts: the role of absence and the 'overlooked' in visual cultural memory work. In Chapter 4, I use family holiday photos to investigate the shifting visibility and mundane uses of World War II bunkers along the west coast of Denmark, introducing the notion of *oversight* to describe the bunker's status in cultural memory. In Chapter 5, I delve into the four different modes of 'productive absence' that afford appropriation and make cultural memory work dynamic and in Chapter 6, juxtapose oversights in tourist snapshots with 'intentional absences' in art photography – in the South African context.

My findings support the current trend to rethink anthropocentrism and turn to materiality in the study of memory. It highlights the role of mundane uses of the past, and indicates the need for cross-disciplinary research on the visual and on memory.

## Resumé

### At spore den kulturelle erindring

#### Feriefotos af erindringssteder i et aktør-netværk-perspektiv

Vi møder, relaterer os til og gør brug af vores egen og andres fortid på mangfoldige måder og erindringen er i stigende grad i bevægelse. Turisme er en væsentlig kilde til møder med erindringssteder. Denne afhandling undersøger turistens kreative tilegninger af erindringssteder – de objekter og fremtidige erindringer, der udspringer af et møde med medierede erindringer på et givent sted – og behandler spørgsmålet, der fortsat mangler at blive besvaret trods tre årtiers nyskabende erindringsstudier: Hvad kan vi lære om den kulturelle erindrings dynamik, når vi følger hverdagslige fremstillinger og reaktioner fremkaldt af møder med erindringssteder?

Alle afhandlingens kapitler udspringer af en analyse af turistfotografier og beskriver, hvordan disse markeres og sætter sig spor i den kulturelle erindring. I afhandlingens første del (Kapitel 1-3) trækker jeg på centrale begreber fra aktør-netværk-teori (ANT) og foreslår en interdisciplinær metodologi, der beskriver det lokalt arbejde i den kollektive tilegnelse i turismepraksis. Kapitel 2 gør ANT-begreberne '*entanglement*', '*relationality*' og '*traceability*' brugbare for en analyse af det visuelle og anvender dem i en læsning af snapshots taget på udstillingen 'The Story of Soweto' ved Regina Mundi Church i Soweto. Kapitel 3 vender tilbage til samme sted gennem en analyse af flere turistfotos med fokus på snapshottets efterliv og dets agens som aktiv erindringsformidler.

I anden del (Kapitel 4-6) viderebehandler jeg en afgørende observation angående den kollektive tilegnelse i turistens fotografiske handlinger: det fraværende og det oversetes rolle i visuelt kulturelt erindringsarbejde. Kapitel 4 undersøger den skiftende synlighed og den hverdagslige brug af anden verdenskrigsbunkere langs den jyske vestkyst igennem familieferiefotos. Jeg introducerer her begrebet '*oversight*' til at beskrive bunkerens status i den kulturelle erindring og udvikler dette begreb videre i Kapitel 5 til fire forskellige modi af produktivt fravær, som muliggør tilegnelsen og dermed beforder den kulturelle erindrings dynamik. Kapitel 6 modstiller det oversete i turistfotos med intentionelt fravær i kunsthøved i den sydafrikanske kontekst.

## Synopsis

### Kulturelle Erinnerung Nachzeichnen

#### Urlaubsfotos an Erinnerungsorten aus Akteur-Netzwerk Perspektive

Wir begegnen unserer Vergangenheit und der Vergangenheit anderer in vielfältiger Weise. Erinnerung ist zunehmend in Bewegung. Reisen ist einer der Hauptgründe für Begegnungen mit Erinnerungsstätten. Ausgehend von deren kreativer Aneignung durch TouristInnen, also den Eindrücken und Einschreibungen, die von Begegnungen mit der an einem Ort vermittelten Erinnerung stammen, widmet sich diese Arbeit einer Frage, die trotz der wegweisenden Erinnerungsforschung der letzten Jahrzehnte weitgehend unbeantwortet blieb: Was können wir über die Dynamik kultureller Erinnerung lernen, wenn wir den alltäglichen Reaktionen folgen, die Begegnungen mit Erinnerungsstätten hervorrufen?

Alle Kapitel basieren auf Analysen touristischer Fotografien und verfolgen, wie diese ihr Handeln in kultureller Erinnerung markieren und nachzeichnen lassen. Im ersten Teil der Arbeit ziehe ich zentrale Konzepte der Akteur-Netzwerk Theorie (ANT) für eine cross-disziplinäre Methodologie heran, um die lokale Arbeit visueller, kollektiver Aneignung von vermittelter Erinnerung in der touristischen Praxis zu fassen. Das 2. Kapitel wendet die ANT-Konzepte ‚Verstrickung‘, ‚Relationalität‘ und ‚Verfolgbarkeit‘ auf eine Analyse von touristischen Fotografien der Ausstellung ‚The Story of Soweto‘ in Sowetos Regina Mundi Kirche an. Das 3. Kapitel analysiert weitere touristische Momentaufnahmen derselben Stätte und stellt deren aktive Rolle als Erinnerungsvermittler heraus.

Im zweiten Teil der Arbeit untersuche ich eine entscheidende Verstrickung der kollektiven Aneignungen im fotografischen Handeln der TouristInnen: die Rolle von Abwesenheiten und Übersehenem in der visuellen kulturellen Erinnerungsarbeit. Das 4. Kapitel zeigt am Beispiel von Urlaubsfotografien die wechselnde Sichtbarkeit und den alltäglichen Gebrauch von Atlantikwall-Bunkern an der dänischen Nordseeküste. Ich beschreibe den Status der Bunker mit dem Begriff der ‚oversight‘ und stelle im 5. Kapitel vier Modi der ‚produktiven Abwesenheit‘ vor, die Aneignungen motivieren und kulturelle Erinnerungsarbeit dynamisieren. Das 6. und letzte Kapitel stellt die Arbeit von ‚oversights‘ in touristischen Fotografien der intendierten Abwesenheit in Kunstfotografien im südafrikanischen Kontext gegenüber.