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Monumentality, Memoryscapes, and the Politics of Place

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Abstract

Public debates and controversies over monuments, memorials, and place names have become contentious focal points for struggles over historical memory and social identity. This special issue critically examines the spatial politics involved in the making, unmaking, and remaking of memoryscapes conceived as assemblages of memory-objects, practices, and imaginaries that relationally constitute memory/spaces. The contributions consider how particular conceptions of the past are interwoven into the memoryscapes of the present in an attempt to legitimize a given social and political order. At the

same time, they demonstrate how places of memory are often highly contested spaces in which the authority of the ruling power, and its hegemonic narratives of history, may be called into question. In this introductory article, we highlight key themes at the intersections of memory, place, and power, and consider several areas of emerging interest that have potential to advance critical geographical approaches to memory studies. Reflecting on the case studies discussed in this special issue, we also explore how the spatial, temporal, and political intertwine in the production of memoryscapes that may appear fixed and frozen for all time – especially when literally cast in stone – but often experience change in both subtle and profound ways.

Keywords

Commemoration, memoryscape, monumentality, place, politics of recognition, regenerative memorialization

Introduction

In June 2021, two statues were unveiled in the New York City region – one in Newark, New Jersey and another in Brooklyn, New York – to honor the life of George Floyd a year after he was murdered by police over a thousand miles away in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Cook 2021; Sheldon 2021a). Floyd's killing at the hands of the police sparked outrage across the United States and around the world, amplifying longstanding calls for racial justice and dismantling the structures of white supremacy, anti-Black racism, and anti-Indigenous colonialism. In the months that followed Floyd's death, calls to remove statues, monuments, and place names honoring the legacies of colonizers, slaveowners, and white supremacists gained a heightened sense of urgency (Atuire 2020; Samayeen et al. 2020; Abraham 2021; Moulton 2021). In numerous cities, governmental authorities officially removed monuments and renamed places (Mathias 2020). Grassroots activists have also taken measures into their own hands by vandalizing and toppling statues of historical figures such as Christopher Columbus, James Cook, John A. Macdonald, Edward Colston, and Jefferson Davis, among others (King 2019; Choksey 2021; Ferretti 2022; Rigney 2022). These acts of de-commemoration – whether government-sanctioned or through direct action – have called attention to the ways in which many places of memory have been designed and maintained to reinforce white, male, cisgender, ableist, patriarchal, colonial power structures. Efforts to challenges these politico-economic structures and ideologies of anti-Indigeneity, anti-Blackness, anti-feminism, etc., therefore require not only social and political change but also a critical spatial politics of landscape transformation.

Throughout history, the process of de-commemoration has often been accompanied by acts of re-commemoration as different social and political groups engage in struggles over whose memories and values should prevail in the public realm (Azaryahu 2018; Palonen 2018; Rose-Redwood et al. 2018a). By installing statues honoring George Floyd within prominent public spaces in the midst of a global reckoning with the racist legacies of white supremacist monumentality, these interventions sought to reshape the commemorative landscape as an enactment of the value that Black Lives Matter. Within days of their installation, both Floyd statues were vandalized by white supremacists from the extremist group, Patriot Front, yet city staff quickly cleaned them (Sheldon 2021b). As this example illustrates, places of memory – such as statues, monuments, place names, and other memorials – may come to serve as rallying points where ideological battles are *materialized* as contested spaces of memory in which different political subjectivities collide through the (re)production of place.

This special issue contributes to critical scholarship on the geographies of monumentality, memoryscapes, and the politics of place by featuring contemporary geographical studies that examine

the spatial politics of *memory-work*, particularly through the lens of Indigenous dispossession, anti-Black and anti-Asian racism, and nationalism. Till (2012: 7) argues that memory-work involves "more than past or ongoing resistance to the status quo" of collective memory-making but also enhances the "capacity to act in ways that may be transformative and are embedded in collective possibilities across and through time and space." The transformative potential of memoryscapes is often obscured by the apparent fixity of "history" when it is materialized in landscapes of monumentality. Yet the making, unmaking, and remaking of memoryscapes is itself a historical process through which places of memory have been produced and transformed for centuries (Nelson and Olin 2003). Herein lies the radical possibilities of place-based memory-work: the powerful have often created memoryscapes with the aim of enshrining their legacy in the landscape for eternity, but it takes sustained work to make the center hold. When things fall apart – as they most certainly will do, at some point – new imaginings of the past and future have the potential to refashion the space-times of the present.

These places of memory encountered in the present are an outcome of the commemorative values, priorities, decisions, and practices of past generations. As such, they disclose more about the individuals or groups who engaged in the act of commemoration than revealing anything essential about the people or events being commemorated (Till 2005). The sedimented layers of memoryscapes embody the labor of those who produced, maintained, or transformed them over time. However, they are by no means inert or dead spaces but instead often take on lives of their own long after those who created them are gone. As time passes, the meanings and uses that were originally ascribed to an honorific commemoration – whether it be a monument, memorial, or place name – typically undergo one or more of the following changes: (1) *ritualized reinforcement* of "original" intentions, albeit adapted to new historical circumstances, (2) *sanitization* by conveniently omitting negative associations, (3) *recontextualization* as a means of appeasing opposition without fundamentally altering the balance of power, (4) *removal* as a political strategy of restorative, reparative, or repressive erasure to reshape the spatialities of power relations, and, perhaps most common of all, (5) *habitualized forgetting* when a memory-object is evacuated of its historical significance as it either fades into the background noise of everyday life or its indexical function as a marker of spatial orientation overtakes its historical-symbolic force.

In this introductory article, we provide an overview of key themes in the literature on the interrelations of place, memory, and power while also highlighting areas where critical geographical approaches can intervene in the spatial politics of memory by contributing to an explicitly action-oriented theory and praxis of memory-politics as geographical world-making. Lastly, we discuss the contributions included in this special issue and conclude by underscoring the significance of memoryscapes as arenas of social and political struggle over the geographical futures of history-in-the-making.

Place, Memory, and Power: Critical Interventions in the Spatial Politics of Memoryscapes

Scholars from diverse fields of study have examined how collective or social memory is produced, contested, and transformed across different space-times (Johnson 1995; Mitchell 2003; Hoelscher and Alderman 2004; Dwyer and Alderman 2008a; Jones and Garde-Hansen 2012; Keightley and Pickering 2013; Tota and Hagen 2016; De Nardi et al. 2019; Murphy 2021; Capdepón and Dornhof 2022; Demaria et al. 2022). From Halbwachs' (1980 [1950]; 1992 [1925]) classic sociological studies of collective memory and Nora's (1989; 1996-1998) historical work on places of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) to theories of social memory (Fentress and Wickman 1992) and more recent scholarship on memory-politics in an era of crisis (Olick and Teichler 2021), the interdisciplinary field of memory studies has made important contributions to understanding the role that memory plays in social and political life. Over the past decade, the journal, *Memory Studies* (launched in 2008), has become a key intellectual resource for scholars working in this field and has showcased a wide range of research on the multifaceted aspects of memory – from the personal to the transcultural – in different historico-

geographical contexts (Roediger and Wertsch 2008; Schacter and Welker 2016; Hristova et al. 2020; Brasher 2021; Gutman and Wüstenberg 2022).

Within the field of memory studies, memory is not conceived in a singular fashion but rather through a multiplicity of modalities, enactments, and practices. For example, Chiruta (2022) examines the memoryscapes of Hungarian nationalism and the nationalization of public space in Romania through the modalities of both "mnemonic polarization" and "restorative nostalgia" (also, see Boym 2001; Pető 2017). Additionally, the use of virtual reality as a mode of digital world-making has enabled museum curators and other memory-workers to generate virtual memoryscapes that immerse audiences in affective-multisensory, experiential worlds (Kazlauskaitė 2022).

One thematic area of memory studies that is of particular relevance to geographers is the spatial politics of commemoration, memorialization, and monumentality as place-making practices. Over the past several decades, scholarship on the geographies of place, memory, and power has documented how commemorative landscapes and spaces of monumentality have been reshaped during significant moments of major social and political transformation (for an overview, see Alderman et al. 2020; Sumartojo 2020). Much of the existing literature has focused on commemorative changes to the landscape that have occurred as part of the rise and fall of political regimes such as Nazism (Azaryahu 2012) and Soviet Communism (Forest and Johnson 2002, 2011; Light and Young 2014); the self-congratulatory spatial honorifics of colonial rule and the decolonization of commemorative landscapes (Larsen 2012; Wanjiru and Matsubara 2017), white supremacist monumentality (Autry 2019), and the struggles over commemorating leaders of the Civil Rights Movement (Dwyer and Alderman 2008b). A sizable body of work, therefore, now exists on the spatial politics of commemoration in relation to various different elements of memoryscapes, including statues, monuments, memorials, historical plaques, museums, street art, and place names.

Each of these *memory-objects* is generally conceived as being situated within, and co-constitutive of, a *place of memory*. In turn, an assemblage of memory-places can be understood in relational terms as constituting a *commemorative landscape* – that is, a space composed of "places of memory" which materially anchor particular conceptions of historical remembrance in a geographical locale. Within the field of memory studies, the concept of *memoryscape* has similarly been employed to refer to the "materializations of memory in concrete physical and territorial space," yet recent works have sought to broaden this concept through "an integrated analysis of the materiality, politics and social imaginary involved in the composition of memoryscapes" (Cardina and Rodrigues 2021: 381; for a more general discussion of "memory worlds," see Hristova et al. 2020). Senior and McDuie-Ra (2021: 2) likewise define memoryscapes in broad terms as composed of three main elements: memorials; the built environment that "hosts" them; and the textual, visual, and digital "circulations" related to such places of memory (also, see Basu 2013, 2016; Davis 2013).

However, the most widely-cited definition of memoryscapes comes from Phillips and Reyes's *Global Memoryscapes: Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age*, where they define "the memoryscape as a complex and vibrant plane upon which memories emerge, are contested, transform, encounter other memories, mutate, and multiply" (2011: 14). Drawing upon Appadurai's (1996) framework of global cultural flows as "imagined worlds" conceptualized through the lenses of different "scapes" (ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes), Phillips and Reyes (2011: 13) describe what they call *the global memoryscape* as "a complex landscape upon which memories and memory practices move, come into contact, are contested by, and contest other forms of remembrance."

From a critical geographical standpoint, one conceptual problem with this framework is that it conceives of memoryscapes as a stage, plane, or surface upon which memory practices are inscribed or enacted rather than viewing the space-times of memoryscapes themselves as active forces that shape, and

are shaped by, the acts of memory-making. To address this issue, we offer an alternative definition of memoryscapes as assemblages of memory-objects, practices, and imaginaries that relationally constitute memory space-times. Through a process of world-making, memoryscapes bring together different historical narratives, geographical imaginations, politico-economic relations, and embodied experiences as memory-assemblages to produce worlds of public remembrance and forgetting. Viewed in this way, memoryscapes may be conceived as both materially grounded in place as well as viewed as "imagined worlds" (for a discussion of the spatiality of memoryscapes from a geographical perspective, see Árvay and Foote 2019). On the one hand, they can be understood as "particular clusters of spaces and locales which have a particular significance in the ways in which people relate to and narrate the past" (Kappler 2017: 132). Yet, on the other hand, memoryscapes are also imaginative geographies of the past that speak to the present in order to shape the future.

There is a long history of political authorities constructing spaces of memory and monumentality to assert degrees of sovereignty over populations and territories, bolster a cult of personality, and forge a collective identity of "Us" against the constitutive outside of an "Other" (Šakaja and Stanić 2011). Although these monumental sites may appear to be "written in stone" (Levinson 1998) – and indeed they often literally are – such spaces of power are not permanently fixed. On the contrary, they can be reimagined and reshaped either through an agonistic politics of democratic debate and contestation or through antagonistic struggle, conflict, or even war (Palonen 2018, 2019, 2021; also, see Mouffe 2005). They also ebb and flow in relation to other changes that occur around them, and the increasingly pervasive influences of the internet and global mobility are leading to new ways of thinking about how memory relates to both physical and virtual places (for a discussion of placeless memories and cyberplaces, see Halstead 2021).

The transformation of memoryscapes through the removal of statues and monuments or the renaming of streets, parks, plazas, and other places has come to play an important role in the making of new political canons as well as the restoration of past heroes as a way of spatially marking new historical eras and constituting political subjectivities (Palonen 2008; Marin 2012). Some scholars have also noted a shift in memorializing the experiences of the living rather than the dead (Atkinson-Phillips 2022). As the fortunes of different political regimes have changed throughout history, the memoryscapes produced have likewise undergone radical transformations through both top-down imposition and bottom-up mobilization (Levinson 1998). A critical examination of the spatial politics of memoryscapes therefore provides an important opportunity to explore how spaces of memory and monumentality serve as a terrain through which social and political changes are spatially articulated and materialized in historically contingent ways.

Particularly stark examples of memory-politics during times of intense geopolitical conflict include the ideological battles over monuments, memorials, and place naming that have accompanied the Russian invasion and war in Ukraine. On April 26, 2022, Ukrainian officials in Kyiv dismantled and removed a Soviet-era statue that symbolized "friendship" between the Ukrainian and Russian people as part of a broader effort to de-Russify the commemorative landscapes of Ukraine amidst the devastation wrought by the ongoing war (Tondo and Koshiw 2022). A campaign was also launched to rename streets where Russian embassies and consulates are located as a sign of support for Ukraine in capital cities around the world (Hassan 2022). Yet, while the war-torn city of Mariupol was under siege, Russian forces erected a statue of a woman raising a Soviet flag, and pro-Russian separatists replaced Ukrainian street signs with Russian-language signage (Agence France-Presse 2022; Farberov 2022). The struggle over whose historical narratives, geographical imaginations, and linguistic enframings of the world will prevail is thus of far more than academic interest alone, since the stakes can be high, as it often has all-too-real material consequences that affect people's everyday lives.

There is no shortage of empirical cases to document for scholars studying the politics of memoryscapes. Every new day seems to bring yet another instance of a statue being removed or the renaming of a street somewhere in the world. The responses that each of us have to such changes greatly depend upon our own positionalities and senses of belonging, past and present relations with others, and the stories we tell ourselves about our place in the worlds we inhabit. For those who have systematically benefited from past and present structures of power, the efforts to remove, replace, or relocate an honorific memory-object may call into question the foundational narratives that underpin and legitimize their claims to hegemony, authority, and collective identity. Viewed from such a privileged vantage point, de-commemoration and re-commemoration are often seen as forms of *symbolic retribution*, yet the very same acts may be understood by those undertaking them as a means of *symbolic reparation* to right past wrongs and injustices, and rectify imbalances in the commemorative landscape (Swart 2008; Adebanwi 2018). Similarly, the concepts that scholars employ to interpret commemorative conflicts and memory-politics are an expression of the values and experiences that they bring to their studies, which shape and are shaped by the theoretical frameworks and historico-geographical imaginaries that inform their work.

Geographers and other scholars have drawn upon a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches to investigate the spatial politics of monumentality and memoryscapes. Some studies have interpreted the spaces of memory through the lenses of linguistics, semiotics, and discourse analysis (Azaryahu 1996; Palonen 2008; Bellentani and Panico 2016; Huebner and Phoocharoensil 2017; Krzyżanowska 2016; Bellentani 2021). Other works have employed theories of hegemony (Vuolteenaho and Puzey 2018), symbolic capital (Duminy 2014), relationality (Groat and Anderson 2021), performativity (Rose-Redwood 2008), queer theory (Zebracki et al. 2021; Zebracki and Leitner 2022), and political economy (Light and Young 2015). Recent scholarship has also examined how spaces of memory and place-identities have been commodified and rebranded as "cultural landscapes of neoliberal urbanism" (Rose-Redwood et al. 2019; also, see Light 2014; Medway and Warnaby 2014; Light and Young 2015; Sotoudehnia and Rose-Redwood 2019; Brasher et al. 2020; Gnatiuk and Melnychuk 2022; Xu and Ji 2022).

Additionally, there has been a growing recognition that the spaces of memory-politics provide a crucial arena for anti-racist and decolonial struggles against the entrenched power structures of white supremacy and settler colonialism (Baird 2018; van der Wal 2018; Lonetree 2021; Scates and Yu 2022). From Capetown to Charlottesville, the legacies of white supremacists have been challenged, as social movements such as Rhodes Must Fall and Black Lives Matter have demanded social and political change (Newsinger 2016; Daniel and Miller 2022; Gaines 2022). During the 2010s and 2020s, these struggles became major focal points of socio-political conflict that, in some cases, have literally become a matter of life and death (Kurtz 2018).

Given the urgency of the issues at stake in contemporary memory-politics, the time is ripe for a renewed focus on the critical geographies of memory, place, and power. The interdisciplinary field of memory studies offers both theoretical and empirical insights into the diversity of memory-making practices, some of which are of considerable relevance to geography – including recent theorizations of mobile memory, multidirectional memory, regenerative memory, transcultural memory, and more (Rothberg 2009; Erll 2011; Radstone 2011; Beiner 2014; Bond and Rapson 2014; Bond et al. 2016; Erll and Rigney 2018; Wüstenberg 2019). At the same time, critical human geography has much to contribute to both advancing our understanding of, and interventions in, the spatial politics of memoryscapes.

Below we highlight three areas of emerging interest that have significant potential to advance critical geographical approaches to memory studies, including: (1) memoryscapes as political infrastructures of world-making, (2) the limits of recognition politics and the potential for regenerative memorialization, and (3) strategies of counter-memory scholar-activism and praxis.

Memoryscapes as Political Infrastructures of World-Making

A memoryscape is far more than simply a stage, plane, or surface upon which collective memory-making processes unfold. Recent critical geographical scholarship has underscored how memoryscapes are political infrastructures of world-making that shape, and are shaped by, a multitude of memory-making practices (Rose-Redwood et al. 2018a, 2018b; Patrick 2019; Rose-Redwood and Patrick 2020). Such practices do not take place within a pre-defined space and time; rather, the space-times of memoryscapes are themselves co-constituted with and through the worlding enactments of memory-making practices. Memoryscapes are often viewed as spaces upon which political authorities seek to inscribe their visions of history and ontologies of power to produce a "world" of spatio-temporal order. Yet the making and sharing of a "common world" is not as simple as it may seem, since "we cannot assume we live in the same world as our political opponents" (Patrick 2019: 46; also, see Latour 2003).

As a form of political infrastructure, memoryscapes may be designed either with the aim of creating a *universalizing* cosmopolitical order, or they may be conceived in *pluriversal* terms as "a world where many worlds fit" together without being reducible to one another (Escobar 2018: xvi; also, see Patrick et al. forthcoming). From a pluriversal viewpoint, the political lives of memoryscapes are not reducible to a linear narrative of historical development or a singular vision of spatial order. Rather, as Massey (2005) reminds us, the simultaneity of geographical space brings together a plurality of stories, memories, and experiences in space-time. One research area where geographers can contribute to memory studies is by examining the tensions between efforts to produce and maintain the political infrastructures of universal and pluriversal memoryscapes by considering the world-making practices associated with different memory-worlds.

The Limits of Recognition Politics and the Potential for Regenerative Memorialization

The act of commemoration can be conceived as a practice that bestows honor upon its recipients in the form of public recognition. Scholarship on statues, monuments, and place names has therefore devoted considerable attention to examining the politics of recognition and the symbolic capital accrued through honorific commemoration (Schwartz and Bayma 1999; Duminy 2014). Yet conceptualizing spatial commemoration through a recognition-based framework has its limits (Rose-Redwood 2016). Namely, it presupposes that the capacity to recognize is *possessed* by those in positions of institutional authority holding the power to decide who is worthy of recognition – often reproducing ableist cis-heteropatriarchy, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism. From the very outset, then, such a political analytics presupposes the sovereign's power to recognize, which forecloses a critical interrogation of the contingent foundation of authority itself. The power to authorize a mode of recognition is not a pre-given possession of the recognizer but is rather the effect of reiterative practices of authorization and claims to political legitimacy. The contingency underpinning the authority to recognize is most evident in violent conflict situations where competing claims to sovereign authority are at stake, yet it has a far wider applicability as well. For example, Indigenous scholars such as Coulthard (2014) have made important contributions to problematizing the politics of recognition as the basis of Indigenous/settler relations in settler-colonial societies (also, see Daigle 2016; Corntassel 2021). The implications of this critique for theorizing the politics of recognition in memory studies have yet to be fully realized, and moving beyond a recognition-based conception of memory-politics opens the field to new interpretive possibilities.

One of those new possibilities involves what Sheehan (2019) calls "regenerative memorialization" (also, see Greeley et al. 2020; Sheehan et al. 2021). Instead of viewing memory-objects in isolation or as fixed elements of memory-places, a regenerative perspective advocates for a systems-based, processual approach to memorialization. Such an approach acknowledges that while spatial commemoration has produced memory-places that can wound (Alderman et al. 2020), memoryscapes may also be repurposed to "contribute positively to the functioning and evolution of sociocultural systems, enabling self-healing" (Sheehan 2019: 189). Regenerative memoryscaping thus has the

potential to repair the wounds caused by prior acts of repressive erasure and the social exclusions of spatial commemoration (for a discussion of commemoration as "symbolic reparation," see Brown 2013). Although regenerative and reparative practices of memorialization can be incorporated within existing recognition-based modes of public commemoration, self-healing may also be understood as a form of memory-politics based upon self-affirmation that need not depend upon being recognized by state authorities or institutional powerbrokers to acquire its own sense of legitimacy. An important avenue for future research on the geographies of memoryscapes, therefore, lies at the intersections of post-recognition memory-politics and regenerative memorialization.

Strategies for Counter-Memory Scholar-Activism and Praxis

As outlined above, numerous studies have examined the political debates, controversies, and power struggles over monumentality, memoryscapes, and the politics of place. Yet, until recently, few geographical studies of memoryscapes have been explicitly framed as contributions to scholar-activism and praxis in which researchers situate themselves as participants in the commemorative politics of which they speak (yet, for examples of such a praxis-oriented mode of scholar-activism, see Rose-Redwood 2016; Zebracki and Milani 2017; Gutman and Wüstenberg 2022; Zebracki and Leitner 2022). In the past, opportunities were sometimes lost to cultivate more action-oriented approaches to critical memoryscape studies.

Here, we highlight three ways that scholars can contribute to the praxis of memory-politics, including: (1) *active witnessing* of an event or process (e.g. protest, rally, public hearing) in which the researcher is an engaged participant, (2) *mobilizing knowledge for action* in support of a particular cause by translating academic scholarship into actionable strategic practices, and (3) *praxis-informed theorization and pedagogy* whereby the knowledges derived through praxis "speak back" to the conventional wisdom of academic theory in order to rethink the conceptual frameworks that inform research and pedagogy. Engaging in a more action-oriented form of geographical praxis also provides an opening to consider new methodological possibilities and the use of diverse media, including art-based methodological approaches, zines, and other digital interventions (Bagelman and Bagelman 2016).

One arena where scholars themselves have much at stake with respect to their own praxis is the college or university in which they study and work. Indeed, university campuses have become spaces of commemorative contestation in recent years, which provides an opportunity for scholars to play an active role not only in studying but also intervening in the politics of reshaping the memoryscapes of the university campus (Brasher et al. 2017; Alderman and Rose-Redwood 2020; Kretsinger-Harries 2021).

The themes we have presented here highlight several key areas that deserve more attention within the field of critical memoryscape studies. Whether these or other themes, issues, or concerns are taken up by future scholarship, there remains a pressing need to document, analyze, and intervene within the political struggles over the (re)production of the memoryscapes that shape everyday life.

Contributions to the Special Issue

The articles included in this special issue contribute to scholarship on the geographies of memory by critically examining the spatial politics at play in reshaping memoryscapes within the context of different case studies. The idea for this edited collection arose from a series of sessions on "Monuments, Memorials, and the Politics of Place" that the guest editors organized at the 2019 American Association of Geographers conference in Washington, DC. Many of the contributors to this special issue participated in those sessions, and, given their own positionality as North American-based scholars, the majority of case studies considered here are based in the North American context. This is by no means to suggest that North American memory-politics are some sort of universal model for understanding memoryscapes globally. Rather, it is important to consider the specificities of each case study on their own terms while also remaining open to common themes that span across different historico-geographical conjunctures.

The themes explored in this edited collection highlight a number of key foci of memory-politics, including: memory-work as cultural resurgence, the use of intersectional feminist thought to inform commemorative praxis, the re-centering of commemoration on Black lives and histories, reshaping spatial narratives of Indigenous/settler relations, the commemorative legacies of anti-Japanese American and Canadian racism, the importance of scale within memory-work, and commemoration under authoritarian political regimes.

The first four articles in this special issue focus on Black histories and (re)memorialization in the United States. In their contribution, Inwood, Brand, and Alderman investigate memory-work as a form of cultural resurgence in Montgomery, Alabama. They argue that memory-work can serve as a form of truth-telling with respect to racial injustice, although the case of Montgomery underscores "how geographically conflicted that memory-work can be." Their study calls attention not only to memory-sites of high visibility – such as Montgomery's National Memorial for Peace and Justice and Legacy Museum – but also to the "latent" places of memory within the city that offer "a new possibility where the past is not lost and can come to bear on the future," albeit in often contradictory ways.

The next article, written by Akbari, McFarland, and Bosman, considers the role that race and gender have played in the production and contestation of Confederate monumentality in Tampa, Florida. Their work historically documents how elite white women's civic groups, and the United Daughters of the Confederacy in particular, were instrumental in promoting the ideology of the "Lost Cause" by constructing Confederate monuments to advance white supremacy. They illustrate how Black feminist organizers have taken the lead in contemporary struggles to remove Confederate monuments in Tampa. Drawing upon Black feminist thought and intersectional praxis, these grassroots movements have sought to challenge the binary opposition between material and symbolic struggles by linking counter-monumental resistance to broader efforts to "fight against anti-Black violence and oppression."

The struggle over Confederate monumentality is one of many arenas in which the reshaping of memoryscapes intersects with the politics of race and racism in the U.S. context. The museum and plantation are two other commemorative spaces where the spatial narratives of anti-Black violence, oppression, and freedom struggles may either be articulated or concealed. In his study of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, Hinger draws inspiration from Sharpe's (2016) notion of "anagrammatical Blackness" to critically analyze how white visitors transform the museum's memorialization of slavery and Black resistance into a sanitized historical narration of racial progress that recenters white redemption. Through an examination of TripAdvisor reviews of the Freedom Center, he contends that some of the museum's white visitors respond to its portrayal of a "history that centers Black resistance in light of white violence" by engaging in "a rhetorical-memorial move that rehabilitates and protects the benevolence of white people." Therefore, Hinger calls for a recentering of Black lives, experiences, and spaces in the making of memorial landscapes.

In their contribution to this collection, Cook, Bright, Carter, and Modlin focus on Southern plantations not only as cultural landscapes but also as spaces where the "dead labor" of enslaved Blacks continues to be commodified through the tourism economy. By adopting a Marxian approach, they argue that the plantation tourism industry sells "tourist experiences to consumers without having to address the dead labor that haunts the plantation," and, in so doing, "they reap a profit by exploiting both living and dead labor and continue to promote one-sided, white narratives of Southern history." Cook et al. maintain that even efforts to revise the commemorative narratives told at plantation sites in the hope of achieving a measure of restorative justice don't go far enough. What is needed, they argue, is a new business model that rejects the profit motive of capital accumulation and instead reorients the political economy of the plantation toward social justice through wealth and land redistribution. Yet, this begs the question: whose land is it anyway (McFarlane and Schabus 2017)?

Long before the plantations of settler colonialism in the Americas, Turtle Island was comprised of Indigenous peoples, lands, and territories. Despite over five centuries of dispossession, disease, and genocidal campaigns, many Indigenous nations have survived and Indigenous resurgence movements remain active social, cultural, and political forces in the twenty-first century (Simpson 2016; Corntassel and Scow 2017; Corntassel 2021). Such movements have reclaimed Indigenous place names, storyscapes, and other cultural practices as well as challenged settler-colonial narrations of history and claims over Indigenous territory. Post and Rhodes's article considers one example of this effort to transform the memoryscape of settler colonialism by rewriting the narratives of Indigenous/settler relations on the state-sponsored historic marker signs along state highways in Kansas. Their study provides both a quantitative and qualitative assessment of a major revision to the Kansas historic markers program that occurred in 2010, which incorporated feedback from consultations with Indigenous leaders and scholars, resulting in narrations of history that were reframed "more from an Indigenous perspective and reinforced Indigenous agency in the memory work process." While acknowledging the limited nature of this commemorative revision in Kansas – i.e., it's a far cry from achieving "land back" and Indigenous self-determination – Post and Rhodes nevertheless suggest that it may provide an opening to more fully decolonizing the spatial practices of memory-work in Kansas and beyond.

The next two articles in this special issue address another layer of dispossession and racial injustice embodied in the memoryscapes of North America with respect to the racist treatment of Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians during the mid-twentieth century. Mulligan's article examines how the Gila River War Relocation Center, where thousands of Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II, was itself located on Indigenous land within the Gila River Indian Community reservation just south of Phoenix, Arizona. These different "layers of meaning" associated with the same place complicate how this memoryscape is conceived. Yet Mulligan argues that both Indigenous and Japanese American communities have worked together to "resist a dominant narrative of erasure." He highlights this case as an example of constructive engagement between Indigenous people and another racialized group in search of common ground "not just figuratively through shared experience and memory, but also quite literally in the landscape." Mulligan's work is a useful reminder that memoryscapes do not simply represent a singular memorial experience of place but rather have the potential to enact relational solidarities of memorialization across difference.

In his study of the racism inflicted upon people of Japanese descent on central Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Canada, Baird calls our attention to four recent efforts to remake places of memory on Vancouver Island as a form of anti-racist work. These anti-racist actions have included advocacy to rename a street and school as well as remove a racist real estate covenant from a property deed in Port Alberni, demanding a public apology from the city council of Tofino for prohibiting Japanese Canadians from returning to the town following World War II, and engaging in memory-work to commemorate the early history of the Japanese Canadian community in Cumberland. Baird acknowledges the importance of the national-level Redress for the injustices that Japanese Canadians experienced in Canada (which occurred in 1988), but he observes that this national response was generally not accompanied by similar efforts at the local scale until recently (also, see Stanger-Ross and the Landscapes of Injustice Research Collective 2016). Baird contends that, since racist policies and practices have occurred at different scales, there is a need to adopt a multi-scalar approach to anti-racist memory-work as well.

Finally, the special issue concludes by looking beyond the North American context with Hammond's critical analysis of memory-politics and the making of "memorial publics" under authoritarian rule in Turkey following the failed coup attempt in 2016. His study complicates the assumption that commemoration under authoritarianism is a simple top-down process by illustrating how memorial publics and conceptions of the "nation" are "formed through uneven linkages and affiliations." These memorial practices are part of the process of political subject formation, Hammond argues, and

they are enacted not only through "the claiming of public space but the circulation of images and tropes between many sites of memory." This observation is important for critical memoryscape studies, because it underscores the relationality of memory-work as a place-making practice and highlights how each place of memory cannot be understood in isolation from the wider memoryscape of which it is a part.

Collectively, the articles included in this special issue contribute to advancing critical approaches to the geographies of memory, place, and power. They do so by engaging with, and extending, different theoretical and methodological frameworks as well as considering a diverse range of case studies that draw out new perspectives and help deepen our understanding of key concepts in this interdisciplinary field of study.

Conclusion

The spatial politics of memoryscapes are a matter of consequence in the public life of communities, cities, nations, and global culture more broadly. Memoryscapes have been (re)shaped by governing authorities as a space to assert their vision of history and set it in stone (both figuratively and literally). Yet places of memory are developed not merely as a means to remember the past. Rather, they are often produced as an act of honoring particular historical figures – typically including the usual suspects of white, cisgender patriarchs cast as heroes of the nation or empire – by placing them up on a pedestal to bolster the legacy, power, and prestige of political and economic elites, expressing reverence for those who lost their lives as a result of war and other tragedies, or embodying the "origin" stories and collective values of an imagined community. The remaking of memoryscapes through the practices of de-commemoration and re-commemoration thus opens a terrain for a critical questioning of who deserves to be publicly honored and who has been excluded, whose conception of history should be legitimated in public space, and how we might re-imagine the making of memory-worlds and engage in praxis that goes beyond a politics of recognition.

As the contributions to this special issue demonstrate, places of memory not only reflect but play an active role in constituting social and political subjectivities. They can also become focal points of contestation where conflicts over whose values should gain visibility, and therefore legitimacy, in the public realm touch the ground in specific places. The making of what Hammond (2020) calls "memorial publics" is a boundary-making practice that produces collective subjectivities through the process of othering (also, see Šakaja and Stanić 2011), whether that be for progressive or reactionary ends. Yet no matter how forceful the effort is to fix the signifying power of a memoryscape, its material and discursive significance typically cannot be contained for long in a singular frame of reference. For memoryscapes contain a multitude – of stories, truths, values, myths, ideologies, personal and collective experiences, dreamworlds, catastrophes, symbolic violences, and demands for justice in the face of systemic oppressions and inequities. They can reinforce racial and gender hierarchies *or* take 'em down, venerate the powerful *or* amplify the voices of the marginalized, commodify heritage through the tourist gaze for commercial gain *or* prioritize the use-values of everyday spaces.

Scholarship on the geographies of monumentality, memoryscapes, and the politics of place is not simply a neutral endeavor to record an inventory of memory-places and the processes through which they are produced. Whether it is acknowledged as such or not, scholars who contribute to the study of memory/spaces are themselves engaged in forms of memory-work and practice that may either contribute to the reproduction or contestation of existing power relations that shape the making of memoryscapes. Scholarly neutrality in the face of white, heteronormative, patriarchical, colonial monumentality is itself a form of *commemorative complicity*, which is why it is crucial for scholars to be explicit about the values and ethico-political commitments that they bring to their scholarship in the field of memory studies.

From anti-racist activism in the United States to the geopolitics of war in Ukraine, memoryscapes have become arenas in which social and political conflicts are enacted. These conflicts are as much about

the present and future as they are about the past, and critical studies of memory, place, and power have an important role to play in both informing and intervening within some of the most contested political debates of our time.

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