



## CARL HAGENBECK ZOO

### Hamburg, Germany

53.59674, 9.93904



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### Executive Summary

The zoo Tierpark Hagenbeck in Hamburg, Germany, was founded in 1907 by Carl Hagenbeck, a trader of wild animals who was notable for his exhibitions of people of colour in *Völkerschauen* or 'human zoos.' Since 2020, petitioners and protestors have been demanding a critical reexamination of Hagenbeck's legacy, calling for the removal of a statue of Hagenbeck from the zoo's entrance; the installation of a memorial; and the renaming of the street Carl-Hagenbeck-Straße in Stendal, Saxony-Anhalt. This case study explores the role of activists and members of the public in generating and shaping the ongoing debate while also pointing to similar controversies to demonstrate how colonial legacies have been dealt with elsewhere in Germany.

## Introduction

Carl Hagenbeck (1844-1913) was an influential wild animal trader who founded the Hamburg-based zoo Tierpark Hagenbeck in 1907. Hagenbeck is known not only for contributing to the development of the modern zoo, in which animals are shown in naturalised enclosures rather than cages, but also for *Völkerschauen* (literally ‘people shows’), or human zoos that ‘exhibited’ people of colour. Hagenbeck’s legacy in Germany remains contested, with the controversy fuelled particularly by debates about how to address the colonial past in the context of global anti-racism protests since the summer of 2020.

Opponents have expressed their views via petitions and protests which centre on the removal of a statue of Hagenbeck from Tierpark Hagenbeck; the renaming of the street Carl-Hagenbeck-Straße in Stendal, Saxony-Anhalt; as well as the installation of a memorial for individuals and groups exploited by Hagenbeck’s *Völkerschauen*. As of March 2022, there are no concrete plans on the part of the relevant official bodies to accept any of these demands. While similar cases elsewhere in Germany have resulted in official decisions to erect memorials or rename public places, their implementation is often hindered by a variety of administrative and legal challenges, raising numerous questions about how decision-making processes might apply to the case of Hamburg.<sup>1</sup>

## Background

### *Human Zoos in Europe and Germany*

Human zoos in Europe were historical public displays of people of colour deemed ‘primitive’ or ‘exotic’ to white audiences. The ‘exhibition’ of people constituted a key tradition in Western European visual culture from the early modern period, developing from the practices of travellers (particularly sailors) who had been bringing objects, plants, animals as well as people back to Europe. Larger ethnographic ‘exhibitions’ in Europe date back to the 16th century, and by the 19th century, the display of people, often colonial subjects, had come to form integral parts of international trade fairs and world expositions.<sup>2</sup>

Having taken place within the context of large-scale colonial exhibitions in which people of colour were brought from colonies to Europe to be ‘displayed,’ human zoos are intrinsically intertwined with the historical context of European imperial expansion, as well as with the rise of biological and

<sup>1</sup> To know more about similar cases please see our case study on Leipzig Zoo.

<sup>2</sup> Human zoos were also displayed in London, Milan, Paris (1931 World Fair) as well as in the US (St. Louis World Fair), and in Belgium, where the last exhibition closed in 1958. See also Anne Dreesbach, “Kolonialausstellungen, Völkerschauen und die Zurschaustellung des ‘Fremden,’” *Europäische Geschichte Online*, May 3, 2012; Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 16-18.

physical anthropology as an academic discipline.<sup>3</sup> In the German context, too, the practice was tied to an imperially inflected visual culture shaped by tropes that depicted people of colour and their cultures as 'exotic,' 'savage,' or 'primitive,' a phenomenon that has been extensively documented and researched by historians of Imperial Germany.<sup>4</sup> Among the many popular ethnographic expositions that were held in Germany in the 19th and early 20th centuries was the display of colonial subjects during the major 1896 *Gewerbeausstellung* (industrial exposition) in Berlin.<sup>5</sup> However, even after Germany's loss of its colonies at the end of World War One, human zoos continued to be organised, with a notable example being the *Deutsche Afrika-Schau* (German African Show), which took place from 1935 to 1940 under the National Socialist regime.<sup>6</sup>

### *Carl Hagenbeck's Völkerschauen*

Carl Hagenbeck was born in 1844 to a Hamburg fishmonger who ran a side business in the exotic animal trade. As a merchant of wild animals himself, Hagenbeck began including people in his shows to compensate for a decline in profits from his animal-import business.<sup>7</sup> These human zoos began as travelling circus shows, with his first *Völkerschau* organised in 1874; the aim of these exhibitions was to give visitors the 'impression that they were travelling the world.'<sup>8</sup> His zoo, Tierpark Hagenbeck, found a permanent home in the Stellingen district of Hamburg, where it opened on May 1, 1907.<sup>9</sup> The zoo was representative of what has been known as the 'Hagenbeck revolution' – the development of modern zoo designs in which naturalistic animal enclosures were favoured over cages.<sup>10</sup> *Völkerschauen* formed part of the zoo exhibits as well; thus, according to Luis A. Sánchez-Gómez, the success of Hagenbeck's enterprises can be attributed to the 'simultaneous exhibition in one space [...] of wild animals and a group of natives, both supposedly from the same territory, in a setting that recreated the environment of their place of origin.'<sup>11</sup> In addition, the *Völkerschauen* served to reinforce and disseminate pseudo-scientific theories about the supposed

<sup>3</sup> Anne Dreesbach, "Kolonialausstellungen, Völkerschauen und die Zurschaustellung des 'Fremden,'" *Europäische Geschichte Online*, May 3, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> See for example David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 2011); Stefanie Wolter, *Die Vermarktung des Fremden: Exotismus und die Anfänge des Massenkonsums* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005); Ines Caroline Zanella, *Kolonialismus in Bildern: Bilder als herrschaftssicherndes Instrument mit Beispielen aus den Welt- und Kolonialausstellungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Alexander C. T. Geppert, *Fleeting Cities: Imperial Expositions in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 16-61.

<sup>6</sup> Anne Dreesbach, *Gezähmte Wilde: Die Zurschaustellung 'exotischer' Menschen in Deutschland, 1870-1940* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005); Susann Lewerenz, *Die deutsche Afrika-Schau (1935-40): Rassismus, Kolonialrevisionismus und postkoloniale Auseinandersetzungen im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Sebastian Conrad, *German Colonialism: A Short History*, trans. SORCHA O'HAGAN (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 140.

<sup>8</sup> Hilke Thode-Arora cited in Annika Zeitler, "Völkerschauen: Menschen zur Schau gestellt wie im Zoo," *Deutsche Welle*, March 10, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 162-3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Luis A. Sánchez-Gómez, "Human Zoos or Ethnic Shows? Essence and Contingency in *Living Ethnological Exhibitions*," *Culture & History Digital Journal* 2, no. 2 (2013): 4.

biological and physical distinctions between members of different races, with the 'displayed' people often studied and photographed by anthropologists.<sup>12</sup>

For the people on display, *Völkerschauen* were characterised by poor working conditions and physical illness. One example of documentation of a *Völkerschau* from the perspective of a participant is the diary of Abraham Ulrikab,<sup>13</sup> an Inuk man who was brought to Western Europe from Labrador in 1880 together with members of his family and another Inuit family in 1880.<sup>14</sup> However, the poor conditions at the crowded, visitor-filled zoos in Germany and France – including Hagenbeck's show – rendered the Inuit people 'on display' in the *Völkerschauen* vulnerable to infection, including smallpox. In his diary, Abraham described the various physical illnesses the group frequently suffered from. By January 16, 1881, all eight people in the group, including Abraham himself, had died.<sup>15</sup>

The suffering of *Völkerschauen* participants is not currently memorialised by the zoo, yet a memorial statue of Carl Hagenbeck by the sculptor Rudolf Marcuse erected in 1926 continues to stand at its entrance.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the street Carl-Hagenbeck-Straße in Stendal, Saxony-Anhalt, still bears Hagenbeck's name.

## History of the Contestation

Whilst the public reaction to *Völkerschauen* was largely enthusiastic, the shows were never without critics. In 1897, Austrian writer Peter Altenberg published *Ashantee*, which protested 'the exploitation of colonised people through exoticist desire in the European public sphere.'<sup>17</sup> In 1926, the importation of more than one hundred Sri Lankans by John Hagenbeck, Carl Hagenbeck's half-brother, to take part in an 'Indian Village' in the Berlin Zoological Garden led to protests from the Indian diaspora who criticised the ignorance of Germans towards Indians and the event's racial hubris.<sup>18</sup> Kris Manjapra also documents how Rudolf Olden, journalist and human rights advocate,

<sup>12</sup> Barbora Půtová, "Freak Shows. Otherness of the Human Body as a Form of Public Presentation," *Anthropologie* 56, no. 2 (2018): 91.

<sup>13</sup> Surnames were not common among Inuit people in Labrador until the late 19th century. In Abraham's case, Ulrikab may refer to 'husband of Ulrike.'

<sup>14</sup> Abraham Ulrikab, *The Diary of Abraham Ulrikab: Text and Context*, trans. Hartmut Lutz (University of Ottawa Press, 2005); Hilke Thode-Arora, "Abraham's Diary—A European Ethnic Show from an Inuk Participant's Viewpoint," *Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe* 2, no. 2 (2002): 2.

<sup>15</sup> Hilke Thode-Arora, "Abraham's Diary—A European Ethnic Show from an Inuk Participant's Viewpoint," *Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Europe* 2, no. 2 (2002): 11.

<sup>16</sup> Tom Murray and Hilary Howes, "Douglas Grant and Rudolf Marcuse: Wartime Encounters at the Edge of Art," *History and Anthropology* 32, no. 3 (2021): 355.

<sup>17</sup> Wolfgang Fichna, "'The Passage Begins': Black Bodies and Americanism in Ernst Krenek's Modern Opera *Jonny Strikes Up*," In *Imagining Blackness in Germany and Austria*, ed. Charlotte Szilagyi, Sabrina K. Rahman and Michael Saman (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012):100.

<sup>18</sup> Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals Across Empire* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 2014): 97-98.

condemned the shows and called for the British authorities to embargo Hagenbeck's company.<sup>19</sup>

Descendants of such participants have publicly voiced the need for critical debates about colonial history. The French footballer Christian Karembeu, whose great-grandfather Willy Karembeu was brought to Hagenbeck's zoo from the French colony New Caledonia in 1931, has noted that participants' experiences were marked by fear and the feeling of being enslaved - he has drawn attention to the issue in the French media but has also called for a more critical public examination of this historical context in Germany.<sup>20</sup> Daniel Haetta, who was Sami, was 'exhibited' in Germany in 1930 by the firm Ruhe from Alfeld in Lower Saxony (a competitor of Hagenbeck's), but his son Mattis Haetta argues that Sami people in Hagenbeck's zoo would have been subject to similar conditions and thus would have had similar experiences. In this case, perspectives are divided within the family itself - Daniel's son Mattis has a more positive view of Sami people's experiences in Germany since they had been discriminated against in their native Norway; however, Daniel's granddaughter Susanne finds exoticised and romanticised 'displays' of people to be problematic, with staged photographs not corresponding to her own impressions of her grandfather and Sami culture.<sup>21</sup>

In Hamburg, an exhibition in June 2013 titled 'HUMAN ZOO' by the Vienna-based performance art collective God's Entertainment sparked controversy by exhibiting marginalised social groups - including people of colour - in cages in an attempt to 'break the cycle of stereotypes in depicting the original.'<sup>22</sup> Whilst connections to the nearby Hagenbeck Zoo were not made explicitly in the installation, the problematic legacy of human zoos in Hamburg was referenced in some press coverage.<sup>23</sup> Yet, it was not until the summer of 2020 that protests against Hagenbeck's legacy came to the fore within a broader context of anti-racist protests across the world, and, parallel to this, debates about how to deal with the colonial histories as well as relevant practices of remembrance. In particular, symbolic sites of memory came into sharper focus - in a notable Western European example, the statue of slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol in the UK was forcibly removed by protestors.<sup>24</sup>

Hagenbeck Zoo's colonial legacy was thrust into the public spotlight by the campaign #notmyhero.<sup>25</sup> In June 2020, a petition was set up on Change.org by Johanna Brinckman, a German

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>20</sup> Le Parisien, "Karembeu raconte les Kanaks," *Le Parisien*, October 19, 2013; Anne Ruprecht and Mirco Seekamp, "Hagenbecks Tierpark: Menschen wie Tiere ausgestellt," *Tagesschau*, October 26, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> Anne Ruprecht and Mirco Seekamp, "Hagenbecks Tierpark: Menschen wie Tiere ausgestellt," *Tagesschau*, October 26, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> God's Entertainment, "HUMAN ZOO", God's Entertainment, accessed March 15, 2022.

<sup>23</sup> See for example Mark Byrnes, "Hamburg's 'Unwanted' Humans, Caged and on Display", Bloomberg, June 17, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Tom Wall, "The Day Bristol Dumped Its Hated Slave Trader in the Docks and a Nation Began to Search Its Soul," *Guardian*, June 14, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Sina Riebe, "Rassismus-Vorwürfe gegen Hagenbeck: Hamburger erinnern an grausamen 'Menschenzoo,'" *Hamburger Morgenpost*, July 3, 2020.

photographer based between Hamburg and Los Angeles. The petition garnered support from thousands of people worldwide within hours of being published; notable supporters included the Hamburg rapper Samy Deluxe and the dancer Nikeata Thompson.<sup>26</sup> Brinckman called for the statue of Hagenbeck to be removed as well as for a memorial for victims to be set up at the zoo, arguing that a memorial to Hagenbeck should 'have no place in Hamburg' because his actions were '*niederträchtig*' (vile); in addition, she believes that the Carl-Hagenbeck-Straße in Stendal in the state of Saxony-Anhalt should be renamed.<sup>27</sup> The petition has not, however, been updated since August 2020.

Inspired by Brinckmann's petition, two local high school students - Henri Gnutzmann and Modou Touray - also began to call for a critical examination of Hagenbeck's legacy in Hamburg. During the summer of 2020, the teenagers led in-person protests against Hagenbeck by gathering with members of the public in front of the zoo with banners, information boards and flyers.<sup>28</sup> While they do not believe that the removal of the statue is an imperative step, they demand that a concrete form of commemoration, such as a physical memorial, be dedicated to the people whose dignity was denied by Hagenbeck's *Völkerschauen*.<sup>29</sup>

The controversy does not pertain solely to the name of the zoo and the statue of Hagenbeck, but has also extended to other features of the landscape of the grounds. For example, the park features sculptures of people of colour, including one of a Black man climbing the neck



Figure 1: 'Man on Giraffe, 2000, Stephan Balkenhol, Bronze, Painted, Tierpark Hagenbeck, Hamburg.' Image by An-d CC BY-SA 3.0

<sup>26</sup> Johanna Brinckman, "Petition: Abschaffung der Carl Hagenbeck Statue & Straße und Denkmal für die betroffenen Menschen!" *Change.org*, accessed December 7, 2021; Daniel Gözübüyük; "Vor dem Tierpark: Hamburgerin fordert: Räumt die Statue von Carl Hagenbeck ab!" *Hamburger Morgenpost*, June 19, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Johanna Brinckman, "Petition: Abschaffung der Carl Hagenbeck Statue & Straße und Denkmal für die betroffenen Menschen!" *Change.org*, accessed December 7, 2021; Daniel Gözübüyük; "Vor dem Tierpark: Hamburgerin fordert: Räumt die Statue von Carl Hagenbeck ab!" *Hamburger Morgenpost*, June 19, 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Sina Riebe, "Rassismus-Vorwürfe gegen Hagenbeck: Hamburger erinnern an grausamen 'Menschenzoo,'" *Hamburger Morgenpost*, July 3, 2020; Daniel Gözübüyük, "Erneut Protest vor Hagenbecks Tierpark: 'Unsere Ausdauer ist größer als deren Ignoranz,'" *Hamburger Morgenpost*, October 22, 2020.

<sup>29</sup> Sina Riebe, "Rassismus-Vorwürfe gegen Hagenbeck: Hamburger erinnern an grausamen 'Menschenzoo,'" *Hamburger Morgenpost*, July 3, 2020.

of a giraffe (Figure 1). Local representatives of the Left Party have called for its removal, criticising it as an example of everyday racism; by contrast, its creator, Stephan Balkenhol, has rejected these accusations, claiming that since the piece is made of bronze, a material that tends to darken over time, public disapproval could be addressed by cleaning the sculpture to lighten the skin colour of the depicted man.<sup>30</sup>

## Decision-Making Processes

### *Hamburg*

Controversy surrounding Hamburg's colonial history extends beyond the zoo and Hagenbeck's legacy. In 2014, Hamburg became the first city in Germany to include its colonial past in the city's official canon of history, and in 2019 an Advisory Board for the Decolonisation of Hamburg was established. The Bismarck Monument in Hamburg's St. Pauli quarter, which at 34-metres-high is Germany's largest monument to Bismarck, has become another site of contestation in the city. In 2015, the Austrian artist group Steinbrenner/Dempff & Huber mounted an ibex onto the head of the monument in a comment on 'the resurgence of German nationalist ideas';<sup>31</sup> and in June 2020, during the global anti-racism protests, the statue was vandalised with red paint. Since the beginning of 2020, the statue has been undergoing renovation works, and - in response to anti-racist protests and critics of the restoration - in June 2021, the Hamburg senate announced that the monument was also to be 'recontextualised.' Three public workshops, exploring themes such as 'Who is actually honoured here?' and 'What makes the monument difficult?' took place throughout 2021.<sup>32</sup> A competition to choose an artistic intervention is also planned, in which a 'diverse jury' will choose the winning design.<sup>33</sup>

### *Hagenbeck Zoo*

In response to calls for the removal of Hagenbeck's statue, the managing director of Tierpark Hagenbeck, Dirk Albrecht, told the media in June 2020 that the zoo was 'proud of its founder and would stay that way.'<sup>34</sup> In August 2020, however, Albrecht released a statement asserting that the zoo would actively participate in updating existing information on the topic of the *Völkerschauen* and claiming that Tierpark Hagenbeck was already in talks with Hamburg's cultural department to reassess and grapple with the zoo's contentious history, yet a planned press conference was was

<sup>30</sup> MOPO Redaktion, "Zoff um Hagenbeck-Skulptur: Rassismus? Kunstwerk 'Mann mit Giraffe' soll weg," *Hamburger Morgenpost*, July 9, 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Steinbrenner/Dempff & Huber, "Capricorn Two," Steinbrenner/Dempff & Huber, accessed March 17, 2022.

<sup>32</sup> hamburg.de, "Workshop-Reihe: Bismarck neu Kontextualisieren," accessed March 17, 2022.

<sup>33</sup> Welt, "Bismarck-Denkmal soll mit Hilfe aus Afrika "Kontextualisiert" Werden," *Welt*, June 5, 2021.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Gözübüyük; "Vor dem Tierpark: Hamburgerin fordert: Räumt die Statue von Carl Hagenbeck ab!," *Hamburger Morgenpost*, June 19, 2020.

subsequently cancelled, and no new date was given.<sup>35</sup> This points to the continued reluctance of the zoo as an institution to radically alter its existing identity in response to the demands made by the general public. Yet, it is also indicative of a much broader challenge facing the zoo's decision-making processes. A feud between two sides of the Hagenbeck family has been raging for over a decade, both sides have sued each other over 126 times. Such lack of common will has significantly impacted the running of the zoo: staff have been made redundant, and enclosures are dilapidated - to the extent that the zoo can no longer keep bull elephants.<sup>36</sup> Whilst progress has been made since the first non-family director, Dirk Albrecht, took charge in 2020, such complicated dynamics may well have influenced the zoo's limited response to calls to address its colonial legacies.

Therefore, the lack of official plans - as of March 2022 - to remove the Hagenbeck statue or install a memorial to *Völkerschau* victims suggests that continued opposition to Hagenbeck appears to still largely be the concern of activists and members of the public. The difference in response and outcome to the protests surrounding Hagenbeck's statue and those concerned with Bismarck's emphasises the difficulties in affecting change from private organisations.

### *Across Germany*

In examining Hagenbeck's legacy in Hamburg, it is worth pointing to similar cases of German zoos becoming embroiled in controversy surrounding the country's colonial past. In 2005, the legacy of 'human zoos' in Germany was thrust into the public spotlight when Augsburg Zoo planned a four-day 'African village' event, drawing international condemnation. Although the organisers claimed that the event was a market and, therefore, it was the products, not the people, on display, the situation of 'African' cultural activities within the zoo environment inevitably led to parallels with *Völkerschauen* being drawn both in the press and by academics.<sup>37</sup> In an open letter, German historian Norbert Finzsch claimed that the event was organised within the tradition of ethnographic shows, proving that the legacies of German colonialism and National Socialism were still visible in the exoticised and dehumanised portrayal of people of colour in Germany.<sup>38</sup> Anti-racist campaigner Noah Sow similarly argued that: 'Two hundred years ago African people were displayed in zoos. Now we're in 2005, and one could get the impression that nothing's really changed.'<sup>39</sup> The decision by Barbara Jantschke, director of Augsburg Zoo, to continue with the event - which was expected to attract 30,000 visitors - additionally led to twenty protestors and ten journalists gathering outside

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Bienert, "Blinder Fleck der Erinnerungskultur: So wird die Geschichte kolonialer Völkerschauen aufgearbeitet," *Tagesspiegel*, August 10, 2020.

<sup>36</sup> Christoph Heinemann and Nico Binde, "Hagenbeck: Der Zerrissene Hamburger Tierpark," *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 2018.

<sup>37</sup> See for example BBC News, "Row over German zoo's Africa show," BBC News, June 8, 2005; Charles Hawley, "'African Village' Accused of Putting Humans on Display," *Spiegel International*, June 9, 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Norbert Finzsch, "No.372: Afro-Germans Protest African Village in the Zoo," University of Texas Archives, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Noah Sow cited in BBC News, "Row over German zoo's Africa show," BBC News, June 8, 2005.



the zoo. Some demonstrators engaged in performance art by dressing up in Bavarian costumes and holding a sign that read, 'Enjoy our zoo, visit a typically European village.'<sup>40</sup> Perhaps in part due to the controversy, visitor numbers were only half that expected, and the event organisers, maxVita GmbH, subsequently agreed that a zoo was not an appropriate setting for future African markets. In 2009, an 'Africa day' planned by Krefeld Zoo to celebrate the first birthday of a rhinoceros also met with criticism.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps the closest parallel to contestation surrounding Hagenbeck Zoo is that of Leipzig Zoo, which was opened in 1878 by Ernst Pinkert - a partner of Carl Hagenbeck's. Pinkert also held *Völkerschauen* for the German public, and over forty shows were performed up until 1931. The zoo celebrates Pinkert in the Founders Garden, where visitors can see his handwriting; and in 2009 and 2010, respectively, a street and primary school in Leipzig were renamed Ernst-Pinkert-Straße/Schule. Demands for the zoo to recognise its colonial history are more established than in Hamburg, predating the global anti-racism movement of 2020. Yet similarly, Leipzig Zoo has, as of March 2022, also refused to truly engage with activists and does not support calls to rename Ernst-Pinkert-Straße/Schule.<sup>42</sup>

Other zoos have begun to grapple with the historical legacy of human zoos in concrete ways. For instance, in 2017, the Wuppertal Zoo installed a memorial (instituted by charities and private donors as well as the zoo itself) for an Australian Aboriginal girl who had been 'exhibited' in the United States and Western Europe under the name 'Sussy Dakaro,' and who had died of tuberculosis at the age of 17 at that zoo.<sup>43</sup> In 2016, the Berlin Zoological Garden opened a permanent exhibition within its grounds about the zoo's past, addressing both its history of displaying humans and its links to National Socialism.<sup>44</sup> Similar initiatives have been started in the public history sector - for example, the local Museum Treptow has created a permanent exhibition on the subject of the 1896 trade fair and colonial exhibition, which was held in that district of Berlin. In an attempt to direct attention to the agency of colonial subjects, the curators represent indigenous people who refused to be photographed by German anthropologists through blank spaces among the other portraits in the museum's gallery.<sup>45</sup>

Whilst the contestation in Hamburg is not as developed as it is in Leipzig, similar dynamics between community activists and a private company are at play, given that opposition to Hagenbeck and conversations about the issue are being driven largely by individuals, such as

<sup>40</sup> Nina Glick Schiller, Data Dea, and Markus Höhne, "African Culture and the Zoo in the 21st Century: The "African Village" in the Augsburg Zoo and Its Wider Implications," *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology* (2005): 14.

<sup>41</sup> Afro-Europe International Blog, "Again Africa Show in German Zoo," Afro-Europe International Blog, April 27, 2009.

<sup>42</sup> See the case study on Leipzig Zoo

<sup>43</sup> Jana Turek, "'Völkerschau' im Zoo Wuppertal / Ein Gedenkstein für 'Sussy Dakaro,'" *Deutschlandfunk*, July 3, 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Michael Bienert, "Blinder Fleck der Erinnerungskultur: So wird die Geschichte kolonialer Völkerschauen aufgearbeitet," *Tagesspiegel*, August 10, 2020.

<sup>45</sup> visitBerlin, "Zurückgeschaut: Dauerausstellung," Berlin Tourismus & Kongress GmbH, accessed December 8, 2021.

Johanna Brinckman. Considering that the zoo as an organisation is yet to concretely address these concerns, the debate remains one fundamentally shaped by the opposing voices of multiple stakeholders. As is the case in Leipzig, the removal of the Hagenbeck statue or even a potential renaming of the zoo would be the prerogative of a private company rather than a municipal or governmental authority (which would be directly involved in renaming public property, such as Carl-Hagenbeck-Straße or Ernst-Pinkert-Straße/Schule). This raises significant questions for the extent to which members of the public will be able to pressure the Hagenbeck organisation into accepting their demands and recommendations as the case continues to develop. On the other hand, the examples of Wuppertal and Berlin offer potential inspiration for the types of memory work which can be achieved.

## Summary and Conclusions

The relatively small-scale recent campaigns advocating for a critical examination of the legacy of Carl Hagenbeck and the colonial past point to increasing public interest in addressing Germany's contentious imperial history. As an ongoing issue that is still unresolved at the time of writing, the dynamics of the Hagenbeck case demonstrate the central role played by activists and members of the public in generating and leading discussions about how to deal with the history of colonialism - a particular salient matter given that governmental bodies and other institutions, including Tierpark Hagenbeck itself, are often reluctant or unwilling to directly address such subjects.

Similar case studies around Germany demonstrate that pressure to address the colonial past often stems from activists and members of the local community, with the implementation of any decisions remaining in the domain of governments as well as official institutions and bodies. Even where stakeholders are successful in influencing the relevant authorities to instigate a change, however, implementation is often subject to legal challenges and/or a long bureaucratic process. Despite this, it is evident that public willingness to grapple with colonial history is steadily increasing and that the re-examination of associated places and institutions will continue to shape public debate in Germany in the years to come.

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## About Contested Histories

In recent years, there have been many contestations over memorials, street names, and other physical representations of historical legacies in public spaces. These contestations often reflect deeper societal tensions, whether triggered by political transitions, demographic shifts, inter-ethnic strife, or a growing awareness of unaddressed historical injustices.

The Contested Histories project is a multi-year initiative designed to identify principles, processes, and best practices for addressing these contestations at the community or municipal level and in the classroom. Conflicts about history, heritage, and memory are a global phenomenon, and, although each case is different, comparative cases can indicate lessons learned and reflect best practices.

## About IHJR at EuroClio

The Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation (IHJR) is a research centre at EuroClio - European Association for History Educators in The Hague, The Netherlands. The IHJR works with educational and public policy institutions to organise and sponsor historical discourse in pursuit of acknowledgement and the resolution of historical disputes in divided communities and societies.

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