

## Monica van der Haagen-Wulff

### Final Report: Body Hegemonies 2017: An Experimental Transfer

In order to contextualise the performance and *symposium Body Hegemonies 2017: An Experimental Transfer* within a theoretical and artistic framework, the report will begin by briefly outlining the work that led up to its conception. A description of the actual project will follow, outlining the final structure, rehearsal process and performance. This section is supported by a 13-minute edited film documenting the final performance that can be accessed through the Project Website. Following on from this, the invited Symposium guest speakers and their lecture topics will be introduced (a URL to the Project Website with links to the symposium lectures which were filmed in full will be available below). Having established the Performance/Symposium context, a more detailed reflection and analysis of the thematic and artistic content will be undertaken. The report will conclude with a brief outline of the panel discussion and next steps we envisage towards stage three of the project. We have chosen to write the report in English so that everybody can be part of the writing process and critical reflection.

The entire project described below, with emphasis on Body Hegemonies 2017, was formatted as a dedicated website and can be found here: <https://lazarmichael.wixsite.com/embodied-discourse>

#### Cast:

Dr. Monica van der Haagen-Wulff (concept deviser, project co-ordinator, scholar/performer)

Dr. Fabian Chyle (concept deviser, scholar/performer)

Prof. Dr. Ciraj Rassool (scholar/performer)

Kelvin Kilonzo (actor/dancer/performer)

Dr. Michael Lazar (scientist/artist/performer)

Arahmaiani (activist/artist/performer)

### Background and Vision - Embodied Discourses: A Hybrid between Academia and Art (Theory/Practice)

The overall Project is conceived in three parts:

1. The transdisciplinary Workshop „Shifting Memories - Moving Histories: Remembering Postcolonial Cologne” (Cologne University 2016)
2. The Symposium/Performance „Body Hegemonies: An Experimental Transfer” (Akademie der Kulturellen Bildung, Remscheid and Cologne University, 2017)
3. A planned performative conference: “Epistemic Violence – Colonial Aphasia: Challenges of Decolonising the University” (working title –Cologne University 2021)

In the original grant proposal, we outlined our three-tiered performance project ‘Embodied Discourses’ as a research laboratory in which a group of international artists, academics and scientists could come together to work within their various disciplines to explore themes within a postcolonial theoretical context. The stated aim of the research laboratory was to analyse and reflect upon aspects of European modernity and its legacy in the present using an interdisciplinary, multidirectional approach (Rothberg 2009) within the larger framework of eurocentrism and epistemic violence. The first stage of the process was the workshop „Shifting Memories - Moving Histories: Remembering Postcolonial Cologne”

held at the Universität Köln in May 2016. A group of international artists, scholars and scientists, were asked to address the key-concepts of embodied/materialised memory, competing histories and power relation from within their various disciplines. By examining a set of common questions around these concepts, such as their relevance according to the various methodological and disciplinary approaches within the varied fields, a thematic thread emerged that allowed for new insights to be gained that were not hierarchically positioned according to one discipline only. The historically implicated, epistemic spaces and themes that emerged and were reflected upon in juxtaposition, are as follows: restorative justice after genocide; the University, the Museum and the Archive and their institutionalised implicated pasts in imperial orientalist knowledge production; and colonized landscapes and the devastating impact on indigenous ecosystems. New insights were gained about the value of applying alternative, minoritarian epistemologies to promote social/environmental change, such as in the example of Indonesian performance artist and activist Arahmaiani's case, whereby she demonstrated how she effectively used her minority position as a woman and artist from the global south (from Indonesia: a country with a history of 350 years of Dutch colonialism) to enter Tibet and use this knowledge and experience to her advantage in promoting social and environmental change and empowerment in Tibet. These issues were explored from the various transdisciplinary perspectives of the international workshop participants (for details of biographies project website). The core insights that emerged from the two-day workshop were: the multiplicity of historical hauntings; traces of trauma; scars and historically aphasised (Stoler 2016) narratives that are contained in bodies; human remains; landscapes, plants, animals (taxidermy) earth (layers of memory contained in earth, the Dead Sea, and in mountains of post WWII rubble). These inscribed scars can be traced back to the epistemic structures built on the legacy of colonialism and slavery and contained in the dehumanising exclusionary logics of Eurocentric conceptions of modernity, still being reproduced today. The violence of this exclusionary logic is further heightened by the relative absence of any ethical reflection on positions of historical implicatedness, without which, a re-imagining of new less violent ways of living together become near to impossible.

## **2. Body Hegemonies: An Experimental Transfer 2017 – Concept**

As outlined in the original application *Body Hegemonies 2017: An Experimental Transfer* and based on our insight from *Shifting Memories - Moving Histories: Remembering Postcolonial Cologne*, we set out to explore further and make transparent some of the themes of epistemic violence and hegemonic orders, that have resulted from the legacy of colonialism and slavery, as the hidden, ambivalent, broken flipside of modernity and enlightenment. Our aim was to examine the Eurocentric logic of dehumanisation and processes of exclusion from the perspective of bodies and their embeddedness within these hegemonic structures. We asked ourselves the following preliminary questions: “What are the bodily traces of the history of modernity”? “How are history and memory inscribed in which bodies or body structures”? “What were/are some of the possible strategies of negation and resistance for these historically inscribed bodies (or body parts – human remains) in the past and the present”? Thus, the project sets its focus on aspects of bodies that have been/are being excluded or made invisible within contemporary and historical discourses. “Body Hegemonies” works on the transdisciplinary interface (entanglement) of theorists, performers and everyday practitioners (experts), in an attempt, to make possible other forms of knowing and knowledge production.

To engage with this topic and explore these questions, we conceived a one-week laboratory in which 6 artists and (social)scientists would gather within the premises of Cologne University to hold skype conversations with international experts over three mornings (9:00-12:00) on the topic of body discourses and the historic and contemporary institutions and disciplining mechanisms that impact on bodies. Resulting from these conversations, the Cologne participants would then present individual performative responses to the group which would in turn be worked into a “performative score” to be presented to the public on the last two days of the 5-day laboratory. The opening of the laboratory to a public viewing was to be flanked by a mini-symposium on the topic of body-hegemonies to expand the discursive field within which to locate and understand the artistic explorations.

### **3. What Actually Happened: Process and Rehearsal**

In stage 2 of the process - *Body Hegemonies 2017: An Experimental Transfer*, as outlined, we decided to continue with our research interests, however, this time by limiting the area of investigation to the body as a site that is located discursively and thus productively within a geo-historical global context. The task for the interdisciplinary performance team, that would gather in Cologne to work together for 6 days, was to come up with their own specific topic to do with bodies and their locatedness within hegemonic structures. Furthermore, to choose a suitable skype partner willing to be part of the process. Each participant was asked to decide, reflect and write about the type of bodily exclusion and the context (the discourse that excludes) that they would like to engage with. The aim was to facilitate a conversation on a level playing field with a Skype-partner interested in holding the conversation and willing to be a collaborator and thus active in shaping the final product. We were searching for a structure that would enable an effective collaborative relationship not based on a researcher/subject model. By working across the boundaries of theory and practice within a transdisciplinary framework we were attempting to decolonise the practitioner/expert relationship and in its stead base the skype conversations on relationships of integrity, mutual interest in a dialogically resonating engagement and common ownership of the final performance outcome. This also meant negotiating modes of working together and establishing in advance how much visibility the partners would like within the final performance.

The themes chosen were: contemporary bodies within mental institutions; bodies bound by time, place and immobility as well as by imposed racial, political, mental and physical borders; the history and traces of racialised, stolen, institutionalised bodies and body fragments; moving, migrating, appropriating, shape-shifting transnational artistic bodies; bodies targeted by political and religious violence resulting from unresolved colonial histories and global inequalities; and bodies’ transformative capacities and limitations within racial, political and gender boundaries. These were the themes that were discursively analysed by being placed performatively side by side within the final production of *Body Hegemonies 2017: An Experimental Transfer*. The names of the international performers, their Skype partners and their topics are listed as follows:

### **The Skype-constellations and chosen topics were as follows:**

On: "The Body as a Target"

ARAHMAIANI (Yogyakarta) contemporary artist & environmental activist meets GUNNAR STANGE Prof. Dr. (Vienna, University of Vienna) scholar in Human Geography

On: "The Racialised Body and the Museum"

CIRAJ RASSOOL, Prof. Dr. (Cape Town – University of the Western Cape) scholar of history and director of the African programme in Museum and Heritage Studies meets DIERK SCHMIDT, Prof. Dr. (Berlin, Kunsthochschule Kassel), postcolonial activist artist, scholar of Fine Art

On: "The Body and Institutional Violence"

FABIAN CHYLE, Dr. (Düsseldorf) choreographer & scholar meets KRIS LARSEN (Chicago) Dance Movement Therapist & Performer

On: "Bodies in Transformation: Gender, Race and Civic Belonging"

KELVIN KILONZO (Cologne) actor & dancer meets LEA GULDDITTE HESTELUND (Copenhagen, Denmark) sculptor & installation artist

On: "Bodies in Time and Space"

MICHAEL LAZAR, Dr. (Tel Aviv, University of Haifa) scientist, sculptor, photographer and performer meets SARI KOURY (Jerusalem/Palestine) Architect.

On: "Diasporic-Transnational-Migrant-Bodies"

MONICA VAN DER HAAGEN-WULFF Dr. (Cologne/Sydney) scholar & performer/dancer meets PASCHAL DAANTOS BERRY (Sydney/Manila) performance maker, writer, dramaturg & curator.

### **The Workshop/ Rehearsal Process:**

The 5-day rehearsal period was held at the *Akademie der Kulturellen Bildung, NRW*. It was decided, considering the relatively short rehearsal period, that being in a place with accommodation, meals and the availability of multiple rehearsal spaces, would allow for conditions of an artistic and creative retreat, thus enabling us to make the most of our time together. Early on we also decided, unlike stated in the original proposal, to each only speak to our chosen Skype-partners about the agreed-upon topic, instead of all Cologne based performers speaking to all Skype partners, in order to ease the logistical problem of different global time-zones and managing our shared show-and-tell group work times. Each day a time to work together was chosen that accommodated the skype-conversation times. Most skype conversations took place in the mornings or late afternoon/evenings such that we had the period after lunch and into the afternoon to work together. The group warm-ups were led variously by Fabian Chyle – who provided some dance/performance body-contact techniques and Arahmaiani who led us through some Tibetan movement meditation practices. During these sessions we shared pertinent aspect of the Skype conversations with the group and work-shopped and discussed the common themes and red threads running through our various topics, to do with bodies within hegemonic power constructions. The following are some of the group rehearsal reflections:

### **Ciraj Rassool and Dierk Schmidt: “The Racialised Body and the Museum”**

Ciraj spoke about how his conversations with Dierk were built upon a friendship and several years of collaboration on colonial entangled histories and the cultural politics of museum collections of human remains in Germany and southern Africa. This was an engagement about histories of dispossession, theft and scientisation, and the incorporation of the stolen bodies of twentieth century persons into the museum collections and research mobilised by racial science. This history of colonial violence marked the museum in its very organisation and disciplinary nature, and sat alongside other histories of violence that the museum was implicated in. While the work of decolonisation was happening on many fronts, the activism around human remains repatriation sought to address a core aspect of the modern museum’s history. These matters couldn’t be addressed effectively only through collections management and provenance research but needed a wider interrogation of the museum itself and its categories and how perhaps the modern museum itself needed to be fundamentally rethought. As an activist and artist, Dierk Schmidt’s work was an interrogation of colonial history and the museum itself with his focus on the Berlin Conference of 1884 and of the vitrine as a signifier of the museum as epistemology.

### **Michael Lazar and Sari Koury: “Bodies in Time and Space”**

Michael and Sari reflected on how the freedom of movement of a body changes from one place to the next within a continent, country or city; how hegemonic body structures vary, change and evolve from one area to the next; what parameters are responsible for these changes; and how the body reacts and deals with them. These “borders” are often physical realities, but in many cases, they are also psychological – put in place by our own minds as a type of defence mechanism. Coming from a “privileged” sector within Israeli society, Michael was faced with the realisation of the extent of external and internal (embodied) borders that his Palestinian Skype partner Sari had to negotiate in his every day existence and how this knowledge gained from the conversation did something profound with Michael’s body and his own experience of time, place and mobility within the privileged international Cologne rehearsal space. He illustrated this by showing the group two sets of pictures. The first was the view outside of his dorm window - the vast green forest of Remscheid, which spread out in endless nature. The second was that of what his Skype partner, Sari, saw when he looked out his window – three, tall, imposing walls that surround his home and were meant to keep him and “his kind” in. Sari mentioned that he was also privileged, holding the “right” kind of identity card that let him skip the long lines at the border between Palestine and Israel to get to work. And yet, he was often held up, for hours for no particular reason, and thus, often late for important meetings. Once across the border, he was forever looking over his shoulder, anticipating the soldier that would demand to see his papers.

Here were two people with a similar, yet vastly different background – both very well-educated professionals around the same age. Under different circumstances, they might even have been friends and not “enemies” as Sari pointed out. Just by having served in the army (obligatory in Israel), Michael automatically belonged to the oppressor regardless of his political views. And yet, Michael’s family was in the role of the oppressed only 70 years before when they had been rounded up and exterminated by Hitler’s Nazi regime.

Michael played on this theme of the wall and invisible borders, raising questions within the performance of who has the right to go where (and who decides?) and what this does to the body.

### **Monica van der Haagen Wulff and Paschal Daantos Berry: "Diasporic-Transnational-Migrant-Bodies"**

Monica and Paschal spoke about the difficulty of the presence and absence of their bodies in space and time within the rehearsals and the final performance, due to their communicating via skype. How is it possible to perform the other in absence and how do you perform the remnant of that dialogic exchange? How the notion of displacement, in this case, as existing in a virtual space in real time rather than face-to-face in time and space, is indicative and constitutive of transnational and diasporic experience. They also discussed how the politics of desire and commerce are co-opted and negotiated into a transnational culture of music, poetry, literature and politics of the immigrant, the exiled and the refugee. In terms of diasporic and transnational engagement they asked what it means not to be able to perform what is in your body - due to multiple transcultural embodiments - when the nature of the gaze anchored in discourse – relegates that which wishes to express itself, as self, to the hidden, secret, problematic, unwanted and invisible? How do you renegotiate or repatriate that which has become inscribed in your body? Which bodies are authorised to carry what cultural knowledges? Who holds the power to decide? What gets erased when you can't bear the tension and discomfort around historical guilt? In Monica's case, does decolonising her body mean repatriating that which she is perceived to have stolen? Can movement, dance vocabulary, stories, memories, knowledge constructions, touch, relationship, love, connection, that make up 'who I am' (an identity), be removed? What happens to the Pilipino diasporic artistic body when it doesn't meet dominant heteronormative, racial expectations? Can the exclusionary violence of hegemonic borders, contained in binary opposites, of one or the other, feminine/masculine, black/white, traditional/modern, authentic/fake, colonizer/colonised etc. be decentred and decolonised by a strategy of shape shifting and acts of cultural and gender piracy, as demonstrated in the work of Pilipino performance artist Caroline Garcia? Does Monica's engagement in this project as a white woman, with the embodied Asian cultural knowledges it contains, make Paschal's embodied Asian and other knowledges invisible in our engagement?

### **Fabian Chyle and Kris Larsen: "The Body and Institutional Violence"**

Fabian and Kris' research covered different aspects of institutional power and violence and their relation to the bodies present within those structures. The topics and questions they asked themselves and discussed during their Skype conversations were:

- The bodies of limitations - how do institutional structures construct bodily patterns? How do environmental requirements, such as being locked up, small spaces or living in a physically extremely penetrating world of bodily smells, influence the 'bodily self'?
- Placing new experience and memories next to each other: how can the artistic and physical work of dance/movement therapy influence the inner balance of a body by creating new experiences?
- What are the different forms of otherness - such as being black, gay, mentally ill, white, the client or the therapist?
- Equality of relationship (which is something that dance/movement therapy tries to construct in the work): How do we work as being part of a minority group with members of other minority groups? What happens to the relationship, considering the fact that we are part of the staff?

- How does the implicit or explicit promise of cure create a power relationship and how is this embodied?
- Who do we meet when we meet the clients? Themselves? The institutional adaptation? The disease?
- How can we work with dance and movement within institutional restrictions, as these are in this context subversive media, which in its essence go against the rules and laws of an institution (interesting for University performance-conference).

These topics surfaced while speaking about their common memories of working at St. Elizabeth Hospital (Washington D.C.) and being part of the institutional structures of the mental health system. Their conversations were based on forms of dialoguing not necessarily open to physical and associative realms. In their conversations they were therefore exploring other forms of exchanging experience.

### **Arahmaiani and Gunnar Stange: “The Body as a Target”**

In their Skype conversations Arahmaiani and Gunnar discussed that there are many negative effects that impact on cultures that are labelled as traditional (or not modern), considered to be left behind and in no way relevant to this day and age. Their usefulness (for the global North – who mark themselves in contrast as modern and enlightened), lies in their ability to become an exotic commodity within the tourist industry. Their main function being to provide the sensual experience of an ‘adventure into a different world’ or an extraordinary experience that can be commodified and sold. Those providing this service can be likened the ‘traditional artists’ crafting unique artefacts from another world. A living museum is constructed, to be enjoyed and consumed by those privileged mobile classes for a one-off holiday or even to be enjoyed as a retirement destination. This kind of commodity spectacle can be seen taking place in cultural tourist locations such as in Bali for example. Or like in the art-world that has been dominated by the market economy – that commodifies and sells art works as expensive handicrafts! This simple example reflects how big corporations operate and how individuals become its pawns.

Both believe that this way of thinking and the capitalistic system that continues to develop and increase in complexity, and which has become known under the name of neo-liberalism, is the root or origin of the problem. They discussed how the body is viewed and treated in an inhumane way as a result of this kind of thinking, shaped by a system of neo-liberal convictions, not to mention older notions within religion that regard bodies as the source of sin and violence. However, the basic conviction of each, although one speaks in the name of religion and the other according to an economic system, are basically the same, both view the body as an object in such a way that it becomes a target, either for economic gain or religious conviction and or belief in God. In this devalued state the body can be tortured or even destroyed completely.

### **Kelvin Kilonzo and Lea Gulditte Hestelund: “Bodies in Transformation - Gender, Race and Civic Belonging”**

Kelvin’s partner Lea is a sculptor and as such works on shaping and reconstructing various materials. She has also reshaped her own body, through rigorous body building, in order to sculpt herself in the image and physical attributes of ancient Olympic statues. Within this process her role in society visibly

changed and she was confronted with many critical questions and even sexist insults. Since the age of 6, Kelvin was a member of several track and field clubs and later also joined a basketball team. On the one hand he was very familiar and comfortable with his physical appearance and performance as an athlete and on the other hand he was confronted with the condition that he never grew any body hair, this physical marker together with being black represented a visible difference to his team mates. Kelvin's perceived otherness often led to inappropriate, discriminating comments and confrontations with opponents and especially with team mates and coaches, irrespective of his performance on field. Lea and Kelvin researched how bodies matter to society and how they are transformed. They talked about transformations according to differences in gender, race, religion and class and discussed the consequences of these intersectional transformations in terms of freedom of identity, choice, movement, health and civic belonging.

They also dealt with the transformation of their relationship to their own bodies and its social and emotional impact. Both spoke of their experiences of alterity as a process of becoming alienated from their own bodies, of becoming severed from their own relationship to how they experience and see themselves as part of society. They both describe the experience of internalising the image of themselves as socially constructed from the outside, much like W.E.B Du Bois' concept of double consciousness "the sense of looking at one's self through the eyes of others" (1903 – p. 351). They asked themselves if it is ever possible to think about themselves as not connected to their own bodies. This is where the yellow raincoat in the performance was used as a metaphor of the representation – interpretation – meaning that is forced on to bodies from the outside, regardless of how one might see and experience oneself. Here the metaphor of the raincoat also references dress-codes and their imposed social meanings and expectations. Kelvin related his experience as a young black man, never wearing tracksuits or hoodies to his sporting events or anywhere else for that matter, unlike all his white German friends, because of not wanting to be read stereotypically as a 'drug dealer' or potential criminal offender. He spoke about the possibility of transformation initiated from the self being an impossibility. That he was always already read and judged from the outside. In his own words: 'I can't see myself from the outside, I never think about being black, but I get it mirrored from the outside every day'. In terms of being acknowledged as an actor and dancer in his working life, he often made the experience, that when he was successful in getting a role, being told he got the role because of being black but that if he was unsuccessful it was not because of racism but because he wasn't talented enough. He spoke of the difficulty of getting genuine acknowledgement for his skills and achievements as an actor and or dancer.

#### **4. Final Event: Symposium – Performance**

Fabian and I opened the Symposium with a welcome speech explaining the process and three -teared research project and thus locating the symposium /performance within a conceptual research frame. The papers presented were as follows and can be watched in full by following the URL below:

##### **Paper 1. "Regular Visits to Purdah Baag": Creating the Modern Body in Early Twentieth Century India"**

Prof. Dr. Devleena Ghosh, teaches at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney. She has published widely in the fields of postcolonial, environmental and gender studies.



## Paper 2. “The Paradox of Hegemonic Vulnerability in Reproductive Narratives”

Dr. Jules Sturm is an independent researcher based in Amsterdam and teaches at the Art Academy the “Sandberg Instituut” on critical theories of the body. Her background is in philosophy and gender studies, literary and cultural analysis.

Both speakers were asked to address aspect of bodies within hegemonic structures in their papers. Devleena Ghosh addressed the period of the early twentieth century when the young Indian female body was re-worked and re-conceptualised in colonial India. These identities and physiques became the bearers of stereotypes, inscribed with piety, domesticity and honour, to be re-cast, re-made, re-invented. This presentation tells the story of an Australian theosophist who became the principal of the first girls’ school in Delhi and who used the tenets of theosophy and the international focus on female education to remake both the bodies and the minds of her Indian students. Gosh argues that the spatiotemporal hierarchy of origin and destination of female emancipation whether in Britain, Australia or India, should be seen in continuity with previous histories of biopolitical claim making. To understand these politics, then, it is necessary to attend to both regional histories of claim making and transnational histories of circulation.

Devleena Ghosh’s lecture can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIzNeEwbzQE&t=1s>

Jules Sturm in her paper aimed to expose and counter the construction of foetal vulnerability in the dominant cultural imaginary; an imaginary that is reinforced by the visualization of foetal life through ultrasound imaging, and is likely to reproduce an ableist, heteronormative, and moralizing discourse of the as yet “unavailable” life. With the help of queer, posthuman literary narratives of reproduction, she set out to draw out the possibilities for alternative reproductive imaginaries which not only offer new ways of imagining unborn life beyond visibility, but which also critically reflect about the potentially dangerous effects of a discourse of vulnerability in the figure of what Donna Haraway has called the “biomedical public foetus” (“The Virtual Speculum”, 1997).

Jules Sturm’s lecture can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exJuVdAswO4>

The papers were 40 minutes each with 20 minutes for questions and discussion and a 15-minute break between papers. A 40-minute break was provided between the papers and the performance, which took place in the music auditorium in another part of the building. The duration of the performance was one hour after which there was a short break and all participants gathered back in the original room to commence the panel-discussion that lasted from 7-8pm.

**The panel discussion: “Bodies between Theory and Practice - Possibilities and Anxieties around Embodied Academia”** was moderated by Ulrike Nestler, a freelance ethnographer and dance pedagogue teaching at the School of Contemporary Dance and Dance Theory at the Cologne HfMT (School of Applied Science for Music and Dance).

## 5. Final Reflections: Performance/Symposium

The central theme that emerged from the rehearsal process and the final performance of *Body Hegemonies* was the notion of borders demarcating who belongs and who is excluded from the dominant discourse. Epistemic borders that determine which knowledges become authorized and acted upon and which knowledges are made invisible by the dominant discourse, effectively erasing the agency and in some cases the actual life of those persons including their remains represented by minoritarian discourses. Bodies in mental institutions, traumatised narratives locked in bodies finding expression in involuntary spasms, because the words to explain the pain can find no safe place to arrive and be heard. Bodies bound by precarity and marked as subversive, immoral, economically useless, and thus dispensable by the political and religious powers to be. Bodies bound to place and immobility by violently conflicted and contested histories and unresolved trauma. Transnational, shapeshifting, creative, bodies bound by one-dimensional colonial and local discourses. Finally, transforming, fluid bodies bound by rigid hegemonic notions of race, gender, class and civic belonging. Bound, boxed and marginalised through the limiting discursive binary logic of Eurocentric conceptions of modernity built on a history of Imperial expansion.

Our common point of departure for the 5-day workshop was the underlying assumption that: 1.) in order to understand bodily phenomena, the body needs to play a central role in the research process and 2.) the active involvement of the body in the research process allows for other forms of understanding the research material to take place as well creating physical embodied presentations of the research material that offers other possibilities of engaging and perceiving the information. In terms of the performance, although we all come from differing disciplines, not all of them performative, we nevertheless chose bodily and performative strategies to investigate the research topic and to present the outcomes of the research process. This was not the case for the symposium presentations although they are clearly embodied and performative in their own right. Here it was the juxtaposition and the talking to one another across disciplines that we were interested in exploring.

In terms of the process and the outcome of the performance we were also curious to see what would happen when we place our interdisciplinary questions and investigations performatively side by side. We wondered what we could learn about the topic of translation? What would happen when the subject matter and discourses from one particular geo-political context was transferred into another and placed side by side in a third context? Furthermore, what would happen when we place academic theoretical formats of expression next to artistic embodied practical ones. In terms of the performance, what would the potential for a dual-coding be when placing context specific material into a new geo-historico-political context that might make the original coding invisible or unrecognisable? For example, how is it possible to talk about Islamic violence, in a specific context, without the act of speaking about it becoming an act of violence in itself, when placed elsewhere? These questions became particularly relevant in Arahmaiani's work in her role of female artist in Indonesia under an increasingly orthodox Islam and conservative political regime. This question also applies to Fabian's deliberations about how to work as a member of a particular minority group with members of other minority groups, to mention a few examples from the work.

We were aware of these dangers and tried to address conflicting dual-codes as they arose in discussion and in the shaping of the final performance work. We agreed that it was important to always begin with a radical contextualising of the various body hegemonies and from there move to more generalised overlaps and connections between themes. Considering this point and our premise that bodily work impacts how the research material is understood and transmitted Ciraj made a telling observation in

reference to his topic of human remains and racialized bodies in museums. He observed that by placing the varied themes and experiences side by side, part of the challenge of the radical idea of thinking about the remains of the colonial dead as still being living, was made even more meaningful when placing their bodily post-mortal experience alongside other experiences of bodily subjugation and subjection. The decades of bodily subjugation that began in life through racialisation and servitude, followed by the continued racialisation of the dead bodies stolen from their graves, buried as they were in marginal graves, spoke powerfully to the bodily subjection of the institutionalised, medicalised body subjected to the medical gaze of psychiatry and the traumatised, dehumanised body constrained by walls and fences in occupied Jerusalem.

Of particular relevance, and a unique aspect of this work, was the way the skype conversations, with persons located across the globe, entered a dialogic relationship with the performance process whereby one informed the other. The topics which we focused on and explored in our skype conversations were brought back into the group through verbal reflection or physical and performative structures, which the whole group participated in. Clearly, the group process then re-informed the various Skype dialogues and therefore a dialogic process of creative exchange was established. In this process we experienced, in varying degrees, the active participation of the skype partners in their physical absence. This experience can be illustrated by citing the example of Paschal and I within the workshop process. At one point I brought my Laptop to the rehearsal and introduced Paschal to the group via Skype. He observed, from my Laptop screen perched on a table between Fabian and Ciraj, how I performed to the group an excerpt we had conceived together in our previous skype conversation. While watching the movement sequence he recited from one of his creative texts that we had chosen for the final performance. He gave me feedback and participated in the discussion with the group. Based on these ideas we continued our skype dialogues to construct our performance piece that was then woven into the final performance. While we were working in this way, I remembered a Pilipino canteen worker at my children's school, whom I had observed skyping with her children in the Philippines, giving them instructions on how to make a smoothie. I had become conscious of the strange noise I heard emanating from her mobile phone. She explained that the sound I was hearing was the blender in her kitchen in the Philippines and proceeded to show me her children in the process of making the smoothie on the screen of her mobile phone. I was very moved by the unexpected inclusion in this intimate interaction and often quote it as an example of how relationship can and is lived out and maintained within virtual spaces by those living in transnational and or diasporic constellations. So, in a sense Paschal and I in our performance collaboration were living out a creative relationship in virtual space typical of transnational and diasporic lived experience, in line with the topic of our investigation. These reflections entered our dialogue and impacted further on the work we were creating together and in effect then back into the final group product.

Arahmaiani commented that for her the most interesting part of the workshop process was the sharing, both on the level of conversation as well as on the level of actual knowledge and skills demonstrated within the performance idea itself. The fact that those, unused to using their bodies in performance, while still thinking critically, were trying out this new form as well as the other way around those not familiar with certain scholarly thought, such as postcolonial theory, were being asked to try this knowledge on within the interdisciplinary exchange of the performance. She emphasized the value of doing this kind of work in a world becoming increasingly individualistic and focused on neo-liberal

capitalist principles, whereby anything that is not measurable in terms of its usefulness and ability to generate profit is considered a waste of time and irrelevant. She noted the importance of this kind of work as a way of drawing attention to the interconnections between issues of oppression, discrimination and exclusion that have become normalised and thus made invisible in the greater scheme of things. Furthermore, the potential for solidarity and resistance by creatively and intellectually decentring, in other words decolonising these hegemonic structures.

For me, the embeddedness of the performance within the structure of the traditional academic Symposium, with its classical format of presenting scholarly papers, was particularly productive. The intellectual presentations by Devleena and Jules, also addressing bodies within hegemonic structures, framed and entered a dialogue with the performance event, thus expanding the transdisciplinary performance investigation to another level. The additional topics of women's bodies bound by traditional Indian patriarchal norms and modernist discourses of female emancipation within contexts of European colonisation and the foetal bodies, still in the process of becoming, bound by the biopolitics of hegemonic vulnerability in reproductive narratives, opened an extended field of knowledge within which the experience of the transdisciplinary performance was filtered. Images and ideas evoked in the papers correlated with visual manifestations and sounds within the performance, such as Devleena's comparison of upper class young Indian women being likened to balls of clay, ever shaped and moulded by the intersecting discourses of local, colonial and modernist patriarchal power constellations with Arahmaiani's actual manipulation of clay balls during the performance. In her action of smacking and moulding the clay into smooth balls throughout the performance, she, in the same way that Devleena was performing it verbally, was referencing the vulnerability as well as the shapeshifting resilience and resistance of marginalised female artist to violent and oppressive power regimes. By physically moulding the clay, the audience was invited to kinaesthetically and affectively engage with their own reactions to the performance, ideally to connect with the idea of bodies as malleable, sometimes vulnerable and at other times adaptable and in the process may have made the theoretical connection to Devleena's discursively moulded female Indian bodies.

This associative process also applies to Jules' analysis of foetal ultrasound imaging and the medicalised surveillance of the unborn foetus and entangled discourses of biopolitics and vulnerability. While listening to Jules speak, I made the association between the image of our bodies curled up under brown blankets in the opening scene of the performance. Round covered shapes, subtly moving, evocative of pregnant bellies, vulnerable states and the potential of emergent life. The discourse around the unborn and its technological surveillance and potential biopolitical medical intervention entered

a dialogue with bio-historico-political fate of human remains, discursively institutionalised as abject-scientific-objects and thus unable to be repatriated as the human remains of subject-citizens. Here Jules analysis of the institutional violence done to the potential mother-foetus bond through the biopolitical discourse of foetal vulnerability (ethical questions as to what constitutes a viable life-form) gains affective resonance when viewed discursively, through a multidirectional lens as Michael Rothberg (2009) would argue, namely the lens of Ciraj's research and analysis on rehumanising stolen human remains exhibited in museum collections. The not yet in form of the foetus and the already expired in the form of bodily remains speak to each other from within their discursive institutional placements and interventions and shed light on the operation of power and control and how these structures transforms and re-establishes themselves in the present.

To conclude and borrowing from Ciraj's final reflections, which provides part of the answer to the task we set ourselves in this project - The analytical processes of the scholarly and creative when allowed to operate side by side without being forced into a hierarchical ordered, exclusionary binary logic, demonstrates that the most effective research about the body occurs when the archival is placed alongside the memory expressed through bodily repertoires of movement, of gesture, of involuntary spasms (such as in the Tourette's syndrome). *Body Hegemonies* (the process and performance) is a multisensorial, inter-medial knowledge exchange, whose outcome is extremely powerful. The challenge in the academy is to hold on to the multisensorial and the challenge of the domain of performance art is to hold on to the scholarly insight. What is required is a scholarship based on the performative and an approach to the performative that seeks to express the scholarly.

An edited version of the final performance and panel discussion can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PtADbdZDx0k&t=221s>

### **Embodied Discourses: A Hybrid between Academia and Art - Project Summary and Future Plans**

Of crucial importance to *Body-Hegemonies -an Experimental Transfer 2017* was the meeting/interaction of various disciplines and international contexts and the resulting development of (new) narratives. Furthermore, the development of *Body-Hegemonies 2017* provides a platform for the already commenced dialogue between the artists and (social)scientists from the Workshop *Shifting Memories - Moving Histories: Remembering Postcolonial Cologne* (May 2016) to be broadened and consolidated with the aim of developing an artistic and theoretical practice together. This theoretical/practice foundation will provide the basis for a large performative conference at Cologne University in 2021 - *Epistemic Violence – Colonial Aphasia: Challenges of Decolonising the University*. The material that emerged from *Body-Hegemonies - an Experimental Transfer 2017* will act as the base for further development and be presented as part of the Performative conference. International performers, artists and academics will be invited to present in academic, hybrid and artistic formats that will be curated and directed by merging the genres of academic conference and performance.

### **Literature:**

Du Bois, W.E.B (1903) *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Penguin

Rothberg, M. (2009) *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonisation*, Stanford/California: Stanford University Press

Stoler, A. (2016) *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in our Time*. Durham/London: Duke University Press