

Transcript Video Podcast: The weight of Remembering

Katrin: So, hello and welcome to our Video Podcast. Mona and I will be the moderators of today's podcast and today we also have some international friends joining us. We have Sebi from Argentina; we have Philip from Poland, and Chiara from Italy. And our idea of this podcast is to talk about the weight of remembering and, yes, we will have a closer look on monuments in general and we discuss it a bit. And first of all, Mona and I will show you one prepared example of our own and we will ask you some questions and we will have a small discussion round. And after that as you already know you should prepare your own monument of your own country and you have to short shortly describe it and we'll just talk about it after that.

So, and first we will come to that we will have a closer look on our monument now. It's the Holocaust monument in Berlin. Um so, I hope you already all see it, yeah.

Mona: Is everybody able to see it?

Sebi: Yes, yes.

Katrin: Perfect, perfect, perfect. So, if you take a closer look on both of the pictures, um what could the lower picture, the lower monument symbolize? Or have you ever seen the upper picture before in your own country? Have you any idea what it is?

Sebi: Um ok, I'm gonna start. So, I know both of them. Are we speaking specifically about these two? OK I know both both of them and they know what they symbolize but the one from like on the bottom uh I think it's in Berlin right?

Mona: Yes exactly.

Sebi: I don't I know what the monument it's called like I think, and I know what it is, but I don't know what I have I have a guess of what it symbolized but I'm not sure.

Mona: What's your guess?

Sebi: My guess is that it symbolizes the terms of like the other Jewish people that were killed during the Holocaust, but I'm not sure. And the one from up it's like I think they're all over Germany. And I think that's really cute because it's something so simple but it's like um you see it every day even though if you're walking and you're not specifically noticing it you see it every day and I think it's a nice way to remember like what happened, you know, so that it doesn't happen again maybe.

Mona: Ok. And Chiara have you seen this before?

Chiara: Yes, I've seen it. I've never been to Berlin, so I never seen a moment in my life but with respect to the upper picture. We have it also in Milan. They're called "pietra d'inciampo" with all the names of the people that used to live like in a specific street. So, I I know them very well and in a beautiful way remember the names and the people that got killed in the Holocaust. And the second one as I told you I never seen it, but I know it's memorial symbolized all the victims of the Holocaust, yeah.

Mona: And Philip, I'm guessing you know them as well?

Phillip: Actually, yes I know both of them. Um, I've been to Berlin and at the monument and what I want to add in regards of the stepstones, people are used to place candles and roses next to them on the 9th of November as the memorial of the "Reichspogromnacht", where all the Jews were, all the Jewish shops and buildings were attacked and burned in Germany in 1938.

Mona: Thank you very good points. And when we take a look at the second picture the one of the Berlin monument. Can you imagine that people could misunderstand the symbolization of it? Or not even recognize it as a monument?

Sebi: Um so I'm just gonna talk about personal experience. The first time, um, I was in Berlin and I think it was like 2014, I was pretty young. Um, at the beginning I didn't know until our professor that was with us during the exchange told us what the monument was. And then I was like oh ok. Um, so I think I'm seeing a few of these questions what I will have added it's maybe I don't know if there is maybe I just didn't see it. It's like somewhere what it is the monument you know because unless you see it on Google Maps or Internet maybe I didn't know. Um or I think some of the names in related in like the stumbling stones in the pillars

who have been killed as well, like I know it will having a lot of work but uh yeah maybe for some people that don't know about the culture or maybe are not informed [sic!] and they go to Berlin to like have on vacation or whatever, um, maybe it can be misleading if they in the entrance or whatever don't see something and they just think it's like art, you know.

Mona: Yeah exactly. Actually, that's a huge problem in Berlin with this monument specifically. And what about the stepstones because here in Europe, as Chiara said, a lot of people are used to them, but could you imagine controversy because of the step stones? They're inside the street like there, um, fluxioned with the ground and the pavement. So can you imagine that there could be people offended by that?

Chiara: From my point of view, I mean yes, I mean it's normal to that there are misunderstandings. It's normal, but um from my perspective as I told you before when you walk around you see them. It's, it's really impressive how like visible they are because they are like goldish and when you look at them you just think of ok, why is there a name written on it and you suddenly think about ok, something happened here. So, I think it's so intuitive it's the way to combine monuments and a strong, strong message.

Mona: Ok, thank you. And Phillip, I'm sorry I didn't want to interrupt in case you wanted to say something.

Phillip: The only thing I could imagine why people could be offended by by the by the stepstones is that probably some people could tend to interpret it as disrespectful trample on their names. That's the only way I could imagine that someone could be offended by that because my opinion it is a very, very important sign to remember all the names and, um, there's that occurred during the the third "Reich".

Mona: Yes, I think um I agree with everyone. I'm giving my own opinion now, sorry. I think I've heard that some people were confused um seeing these step stones in Europe because people could technically walk over it but I think Chiara and Phillip would agree with me, but people tend to actually walk around and not step on the step stones because we know it's something, um, important. But coming back to the Holocaust monument in Berlin, Katrin and I have prepared something for you of people misunderstanding the monument and, um, we're gonna take a quick look at it right now.

Katrin: You will see it here right now there are people sunbathing on the stones or they're just doing acrobatics, here, like you can see here. Or there, doing pictures for dating portals like Lovoo or Tinder or something. And yeah, what do you think about that? Do you think it's normal do you think it's ok? Or what is your opinion about that?

Sebi: Um ok, I'm gonna start again. The thing is I have like two different opinions um about this kind of stuff, um, because the first one I I think it's, um, I think it's such a like what the monument symbolizes such like something horrible that happened, that when you see this stuff you're like "Oh my God". But from the other side it's like I think the monument is like so um I don't know how to say it um, Mona maybe you can help me? I'm "impactante", impactful yeah.

It's so big and it's so like eye catchy, but I think from one side if you see it from another perspective perspective it's like ok maybe the people that are going here and taking this picture and doing this, maybe at the beginning they don't know and they're taking pictures but then maybe just like by I'm searching on the Internet or maybe someone is going to tell them what the monument is. And then they get like the information they needed, so it's like I think like all these pictures kind of also like a way of like keeping the thoughts and remembering what happened because I, or at least I want to believe that these people didn't know what the monument symbolized. But I think it's like, also like a good way you know if you see it as like "Ok, they're taking pictures" and that keeps like the monument alive because it's like eye catchy and like it's still in the mouth of the people so to say. So, it's kind of like two sides of the same coin. Like that's my view.

Mona: Ok, yes thank you.

Chiara: I totally agree with Sebastian. It's about the location in general. Getting that information and building your perspective. So, I think what's missing with these people is think about what really means and this moment

Mona: So, you would say it might be prevented if you would put more signs? You would put up more signs that says this is a monument for the Holocaust for example.

Chiara: Yes, yes why not. Like, more touch points you know. Records and cards that explain them um the history.

Mona: Ok, yes. Good idea, great idea. Um, one last question then we have to move on. Would you say something like this could happen in your own country with monuments? Have you ever seen such a horrible misinterpretation before?

Chiara: Oh, in Italy yes. For example, most famous is the "Fontana di Trevi" in Rome. Some people use it as a swimming pool for the hot, for the warm days to to refresh. I mean this is super important sign of a sculpture and you know and art it's not a swimming pool to refresh.

Mona: Yeah obviously. It should be obvious, let's say like that.

Chiara: Yes, yes, yes, I agree.

Mona: Okay if there's nothing you want to add I would quickly move on as we need to keep the enclosed eye on the time.

Katrin: So, we would just move on to the introduction of your own examples prepared of you. And we have three different questions. After that you just present your monument um shortly and then we just go on with a few questions shortly and then yeah. The questions are as you can sorry sorry.

Mona: Everybody should answer the question not just the present presenting might be good to have. Sorry Katrin.

Katrin: No, no worries! sorry I just wanted to read out the questions for you like um how do these monuments make you feel after presenting them? Or would you say the feelings are different from the person that picked the monument and why is that? And in the end do you think different cultures work differently with monuments? And with emphasis of course on your own culture. And now we just move forward for the first monument of Sebi.

Sebi: Um, so this was the monument for foreigners, I don't know yeah, for Christopher Columbus and it's it was located like almost in the main center, I think it's like right next to like the like kind of like the White House, but we call it the pink house in Argentina. Um, and I think a few years back um I don't think it was only in Argentina but in Latin America there was kind of like a wave on social media of like

um people saying like “why do we even have monuments of these people in our cities, when these people were the ones that came back to our countries and like did the things they did”. I don't wanna get in that history class right now. So, it was kind of like a wave, there was I think not I don't wanna generalize but I think a lot of the younger generation was like “yeah why do we even have this?” and I think like maybe, I mean there was old people that also was like “yeah they should like take it off like why why do we even have this?”. Um, it was kind of like a mix, um, until they changed it and on the right image you can see the new one. My problem is with the right one, I don't know if it's probably if someone from Argentina sees a public house and knows what it means. I don't know what it symbolized the new one I will have gone for something else maybe but I I agree with removing the one from Christopher Columbus. I mean I will have put it maybe in another part of the city the one from Christopher Columbus, because I think it's also like part of the history of the continent and the country even though you like it or not. But I don't think the place for this type of monument was like right in the heart of Buenos Aires. Um I think Buenos Aires has so much more story and stuff that can symbolize it, um, to have something else in the like heart of the city. So yeah, and I think right now the the monument of Christopher Columbus is in another city next to the beach is called Mar del Plata, I think, um, because I think the people from the city there's a lot of like a big Italian community, I think. And they were like um “we want it” we were like “don't throw it out, we want it”. So yeah, I don't remember all the three questions that were there.

Mona: It's ok.

Sebi: I don't know if I went over them.

Mona: It's ok. That's why I'm here. So, for everyone else when you think about changing a monument especially when it's connected to history like it is in this example, do you think it's a good idea? Or can you imagine the same thing happening in your country?

Chiara: Um yes, it's not a simple. But it's good to always question it, makes sense you know. Not just given for granted, um, a monument or a statue or whatever. It's so, it's always good to ask you “who is”, I mean for example for a statue “who is this person?”, “what did it?”, because the values we have now are involving. They're not the same of, um, like also five years ago, I mean values are always evolving and we are going into the future with different with an open opener mind, you know. So, I think this yeah.

Phillip: Well, I think, uh, changing a monument, um ah, I see it similar to Chiara. It depends on the monument as itself. Um for example if a monument is old enough to be restored changing a part of the monument as itself is ok, I think, just to modernize it. But um in regards of paradigm shift, I mean, um, how we see historic events, um, for example in Germany old Baroness and parents whose statues are depicted through the city, um, with some kind of anti-Jewish, um, texts on it. I think that in these regards changing a monument is ok, I guess.

Mona: Ok, so you would all say if it's, um, offensive or um depicting or minimizing something that happened in the past that was horrendous or worse problematic you would somehow change it so it's an obvious understanding that this person isn't a Saint or what happened was not good? Did I understand that right?

Phillip: Yep, exactly.

Chiara: Yes.

Mona: Ok good. Then I guess we gonna move on with the next presenter.

Katrin: I just want to add something. Just look at the time and then we have a problem because it will stop the recording, so we need to be a bit quicker. We have 5 minutes just to let you know. We have to short it, ok? Just to inform you sorry, sorry. Ok I will go on. Now it's your time Philip.

Phillip: Ok I tried to shorten it a bit. So, the picture shows the uprising monument in Warsaw it depicts a scene from the Warsaw uprising in 1944. It was right by the Polish rebel home army as a kind of scrap. Actually, the monument is divided in two parts. In front of the stairs there's a scene showing the application of the Old Town. This scene shows the actual riot um the monument it is as itself is placed in front of the Supreme Court, which you can see in the background. Um, in regards of controversial discussions, um, it is a therefore controversial because of the, the decisions made in that time and the riot at itself because there were about 150,000 casualties alone in Warsaw and about 35% of the city ward destroyed during, during the uprising. Um, the monument was placed there by the current converse conservative party in regards of patriotism. So, there was a big discussion about this because, yeah, all the tactical decisions were put in the background and just the heroism and, yeah sorry, I forgot I wanted to say- But that's it.

Mona: And when you think about the monument would you say it's controversial in Poland?

Phillip: Um I wouldn't say that. It was a controversial by the time it was revealed.

Mona: Ok. And the views have changed a little bit since then or?

Phillip: Yeah, the views have I'm not sure if the views have changed but I guess it isn't that important anymore.

Mona: Ok. Ok.

Katrin: Thank you Phillip. Thank you.

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Mona: Phillip has shown us his monument. Um, could you give us a quick impression on the look? Just the look of it.

Chiara: Um, I don't know at the moment. So, it was nice to hear about the history and the controversial, um, reflection that thoughts that are currently going in Poland. It's a song, I mean it gives me the idea of yes like Warren. It's a strong strong it has a strong strong impact, I think.

Mona: Sebi what about you? How does it make you feel?

Sebi: I think the monument is really beautiful and it's like really like big and impactful. So, if I will be in Warsaw and Poland and I see that it will make me wanna know more about the story, which I think it's pretty good.

Mona: Yeah, that's the best outcome a monument can have, I would say. Ok. Chiara you also have an monument prepared.

Chiara: Yes, so I decided to talk about the theater of my hometown Taormina. Uh, it's a little bit different from the others because it's super, super ancient. Um, I said talk about this because it represents my childhood. I was every time there going to concert or events or it kind of represents me as a person, my

path as a person. It is considered the most fascinating monument of the union sea. Wolfgang Goethe said to know the theater audiences never had such a sight in front because you see the sea, the Etna, the volcano. So, it's, it's a beautiful, beautiful view. It is divided into three parts which, which are the scene, the orchestra, and the auditorium. Um, what I like the most in general about the theatre and architectural style is that, um, they used to build the most important buildings of the of the ancient city inside the nature, as they are part of them. So, if you see it this build this art directly into the rock of them. It's called Monte Taro, which is our mount mountain. In the 3rd century before Christ. So, I like how this scenery is super, super integrated with the architecture of the theater and, um, it has a very, very good listening. It's perfect listening from any area of the auditorium.. So, I invite you to visit for a concert or an event. After the Greek theater, it became it was adopted for the gladiatorial games and then at the end of the imperial period it was like, it was he fall into his years, so it was never used until now that is the most one of the most important attractions tourist attraction that we have.

Mona: Um, and you, you would say you have an emotional connection to it? And, um, when you said that, would you say that the more it becomes a monument as you start having the emotional connection?

Chiara: Um, as I told you I don't know about them the precise moment. But since I was a child, I was used to go there for the summertime, the program of events, because we have a really super full program which includes ballets, events, concerts, many, many, many different. A variety of, of initiatives. So yes, I feel super, super connected when I'm, when I spend time in Sicily during summer, I always feel the need to go back to the theater for just one night, you know. It's something that I, I use as a my routine my to feel good, you know.

Mona: That's actually a really great example, I think, if we compare it to the other monuments. This one represents something beautiful, something more happy. A bright view on history, one could say, instead of just the bad things that we talked about before. And so, I would love to hear your impression of it. Philip, maybe you can start.

Phillip: My impression about this monument it's just beautiful on the picture. I'm a big fan of Italy's monuments, I've been to Herculaneum for example. It's very interesting about the whole era, um, it was built in. Um, well I think I have to go to Sicily to see it by myself.

Mona: Ok I agree. I now I really want to go.

Katrin: Me too. Ok does someone wants to add something? Maybe Sebi or do you just agree with the others?

Sebi: I agree with Phillip. I'm booking a flight right now. It looks beautiful. I think it's a, it's a it's a country in this monument like brings so much history. I'm sure if you like dig for the information, um, and it just from seeing the pictures makes me wanna go there. Um, I will ask my grandmother is actually from or was from Sicily, um, so if she will be alive, I will ask her like "Oh my God like have you been there? How was it like?". Uh, you know but I think it's something really beautiful and it's really different the contrast of this monument to the other two ones that we saw.

Mona: Ok yes, I think you finally kind of made it through our whole torture that we put you through. We just have one last point and that's our little discussion and I would love to hear everyone's opinion. Katrin and I will also give a short opinion on it but we're gonna start with you guys. So, what do you think different cultures work differently with monuments or does everybody has a common ground? How do you feel about it?

Sebi: I think there is between all of the different cultures and countries kind of like a common ground, but I guess there's also some difference differences on how they work or how people pay respect to

different monuments. Like maybe if I'm in Argentina and I'm drinking a beer sitting next to a monument people are gonna be like "Ok don't worry it's everything will fine" but if I do it I will now in an ancient country or somewhere else that I don't know the culture, maybe people will feel I'm doing something bad. I don't know, maybe I'll get that feeling and maybe also in the way how monuments are displayed. I don't know um but I'm not sure.

Mona: Ok yeah. I mean it's an interesting point that you said. Kind of depends on how the culture itself, um, works around the topic of remembering and obviously their understanding of honoring something history. Yes, I, I agree with you totally.

Sebi: But I, I feel it's also like a lot of people from there like know the history and can relate with the history of their country or culture better. So maybe they have another feeling with the monuments, um, for example as we were seeing the first one in Berlin maybe like for Germans they have another opinion as maybe someone that is not from here. But I think that's maybe what's beautiful from monuments is like everyone can relate to them differently, but the point is to remember something or make you learn something about that place or that culture or that historic event that happened.

Mona: Yeah, yeah, I agree. How, how would they agree? What would you say?

Chiara: No, I totally agree. I mean I thought only about cultures it's also about hate. I mean, which century we live and, yes, it's also about the time. Uh, but I totally agree in general. And, um yeah, it's, uh, it's also beautiful, I think it's a beautiful way of thinking about monuments. I never thought about that but it's a beautiful way to think about cultures that influence the monuments and the style and then the messages because, yeah, for example, past war in Berlin the culture of reconstruction [sic!] and new values influenced of course the monument that you were showing us so, yeah.

Katrin: Phillip do you want to add something or?

Phillip: I have nothing to add. I totally agree with Sebi and Chiara.

Katrin: I just I just want to add one more thing. Um, I think also I don't know how it is in Poland, Italy, or Argentina but we were talking a lot about the Second World War in school, and we dealt a lot with history and we were also doing like school trips for one day to the concentration camps, for example, that the past never repeat itself anymore. And like that something like this can't happen again and it's super important to point it out to young students in general and I think everyone is doing that in their own country with their own history. Um, and I think it's very important to know in general to visit monuments, to, I don't know, I would love to visit all of the monuments you showed here and, I don't know, because it's super interesting to know more about cultures in general and how they deal with their history and yeah that's it. I just agree with the others and yeah.

Mona: I think in the end of the day, um, my consensus of our discussion kind of is that even though we have big cultural differences, um, somehow, we have a very common ground with how we honor our past and it somehow is important for every one of us to respect it and have something to remember it. And, um, what I also think is quite fascinating, is that points throughout history every now and then we understand we made mistakes in the past that something was not as good as it seemed at the moment, for example, when we think about Christopher Columbus, who is greatly celebrated all over the world even though he kind of initiated a certain genocide that has happened in Latin America. So, he represents that Hispanization which has not always been peaceful. So, I think it's quite fascinating how we deal with remembering the good and the bad and, yeah, I'm, I'm very happy we had this discussion today because you guys have really fascinating opinions and views and I'm very happy that we could convince you to join us here and help us out. And I would love, and I think Katrin would agree, I would

love to do that in private again sometimes soon maybe with a little bit of a Italian wine or Argentinian wine. But yeah, thank you very much.

Chiara: Thank you so much.

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