

## TELLING TIMES: MEMORIES OF CULTURE, CULTURES OF MEMORY



Wednesday, 19 January 2022, 17:00-18:30 (CET)

**CHIARA DE CESARI**  
(University of Amsterdam)

### “Memory, Race, Decolonial Activism”

By way of a set of vivid examples, in this talk I will examine the ways in which (colonial) memory conflicts intersect with contemporary political debates and struggles around one of the most topical issues of our time, namely, the systemic racism that is structural in our societies in Europe and beyond. First, I discuss right-wing populists’ powerful reliance on ideas of memory and heritage. Memory and heritage scholars have recently begun to explore the relationship between their subject matter and the momentous rise (or return) of ultranationalism. I argue that to understand the relationship between memory and populism we must foreground the question of race and cultural racism, both of which are thus far neglected in memory studies. Second, I also present preliminary results of another strand of research I am conducting with Wayne Modest of the National Museum of World Cultures that focuses on



how decolonial activists and artists are contesting that very racism by engaging with colonial memories in new and creative ways. Activating memory sites and mnemonic strategies, activists are showing us how changing the present goes through a reconsideration and refashioning of the past that may prefigure a more just future.

**Chiara De Cesari** is Associate Professor in European Studies and Cultural Studies at the University of Amsterdam. Her wide-ranging research explores how forms of memory, heritage, art, and cultural politics are shifting under conditions of contemporary globalization and state transformation. Chiara leads a major Dutch Research Council-funded Vidi project on “Imagining Institutions Otherwise: Art, Politics, and State Transformation.” She is the author of *Heritage and the Cultural Struggle for Palestine* (Stanford UP, 2019), and co-editor of two key volumes in memory studies (*European Memory in Populism*, Routledge, 2019; *Transnational Memory*, de Gruyter, 2014), and of a special issue of the *International Journal of Heritage Studies* on urban heritage and gentrification (2018). Committed to international and interdisciplinary collaboration, she has been involved in several major international research projects. Currently, she is also co-PI of the NWA project “Pressing Matter: Ownership, Value and the Question of Colonial Heritage in Museums”, and a member of the HERA’s “en/counter/points” project and the Trans-Atlantic Platform for Social Innovation’s “Worlding Public Cultures” network.



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