

# Confidently Changing Colonial Heritage

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**Conference presentation / Izlaganje na skupu**

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*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2025-02-22**



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**Why this project?**

European societies are currently facing *unprecedented changes in the way they manage the cultural heritage of their colonial past*. Challenges are emerging in fields as diverse as education through textbooks, museums through the question of provenance and restitution, the public sphere through the persistence of the colonial past, or in popular traditions such as that of the Black Peter (*Zwarte Piet*).

Focuses on the many **changes in the representations** of overseas colonialism, specifically **colonial cultural heritage (CCH)** that are going on in the European society, and that are related to intergroup conflicts.



**Funded by the European Union**

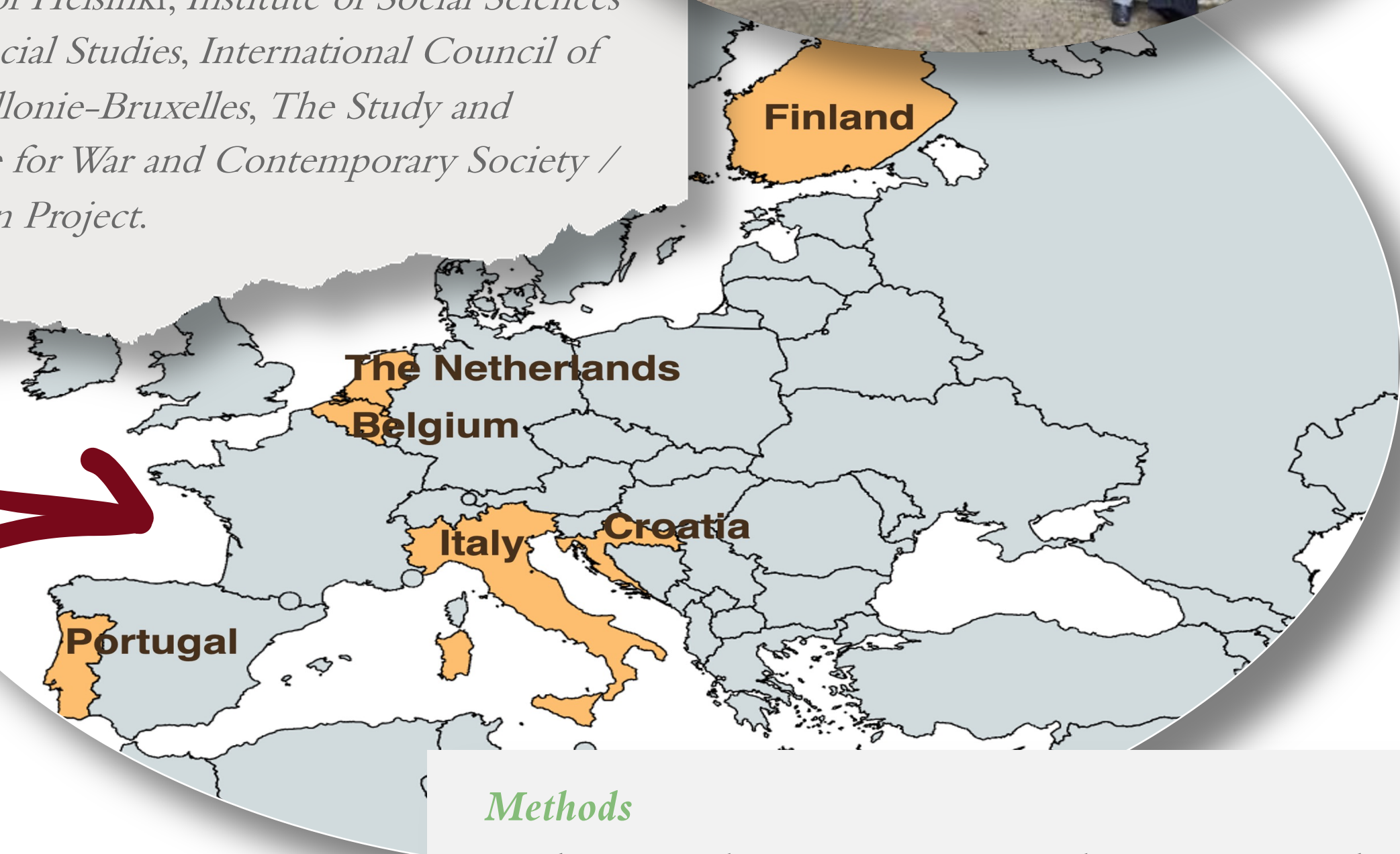
**Confidently Changing Colonial Heritage**

- Identify and analyze changes in colonial cultural heritage (CCH) across four domains (textbooks, public spaces, museums, and products and traditions related with CCH)
- Advance knowledge about reactions to and representations of changes in CCH held by diverse sociodemographic (ethnic, so-called race, gender, generation, and cultural contexts),
- Propose evidence-based methods tailored to each domain, and applicable across cultural contexts, capable of promoting confidence in facing changes in CCH and strengthening inter-group dialogue.

**Interdisciplinary approach**

Bringing together experts from different fields of Social Sciences and Humanities – *social psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and historians* – from 9 scientific and 2 non-scientific organizations:

University of Coimbra and University of Minho, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Utrecht University, Sapienza University, University of Helsinki, Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar, Centre for Social Studies, International Council of Museums Belgique Wallonie-Bruxelles, The Study and Documentation Centre for War and Contemporary Society / State Archives, Afropean Project.



2024 – 2027  
Grant agreement ID: 101132582

Why?  
Who?  
When?  
Where?  
How?

**Methods**

Qualitative and quantitative case studies, experimental studies, documentary and media research. The social psychologists involved are directly (as authors) or indirectly (as editors) responsible for most of the existing literature on changes and controversies regarding CCH.

**Participants and data**

CONCILIARE will be implemented in European countries that were former colonizers (Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal) and in countries without a formal overseas colonial past (Croatia and Finland).

Qualitative & quantitative data  
WP1: textbook material from 3 countries, 20 thematic interviews (15–19-year-olds) in 3 countries, intergenerational approach, interviews (n = 30) with parents and grandparents of interviewees from majorities/minorities.

WP2: geographic location data, text, and visual evidence of colonial CCH traces, interview data in audio and text form

WP3: video and audio data, quantitative and qualitative survey data (n = 300 per country), experimental data (150 participants/experimental condition) consisting of video recordings and their coded text files

AXIS 1  
CCH: changes, reactions, & representations

AXIS 2  
Promoting confidence in changes in CCH

**Textbooks: changing CCH with confidence**

- Analysing the construction of and changes in colonial narratives and images including:
- 1) textbook material (text and images) of history, geography, religion and mother tongue, for 15–18-year-old students, from 3 countries (FI, IT, PT)
  - 2) 20 thematic interviews with people between 15 and 19 in each of the 3 countries
  - 3) intergenerational approach, interviews (n = 30) with parents and grandparents of interviewees from majorities/minorities.

**CCH in public spaces: change as a tool for confidence**

- Investigating the changes in CCH in public spaces → analyzing geographic location data, text and visual evidence of colonial CCH traces, interview data in audio and text form:
- 1) Mapping traces of CCH in 9 European cities → comparative research on the identification and contextualization of CCH traces based on primary and secondary sources (local and national archives, newspapers, archives from stakeholders). Two cases (such as monuments, public squares, statues etc.) in each city selected and analyzed in depth.
  - 2) Framing and overcoming the contemporary grounds of the dispute over CCH in the public space - analyze contemporary situations of disputes and controversies over CCH that are objects of contestation.

**Confidently facing CCH contested historical narratives and ownership in museums**

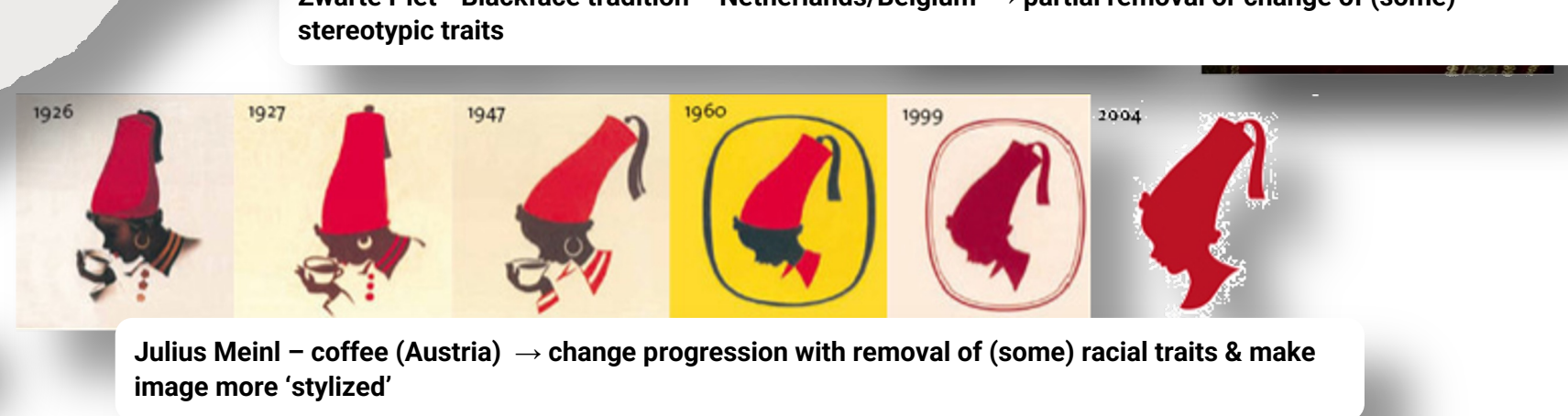
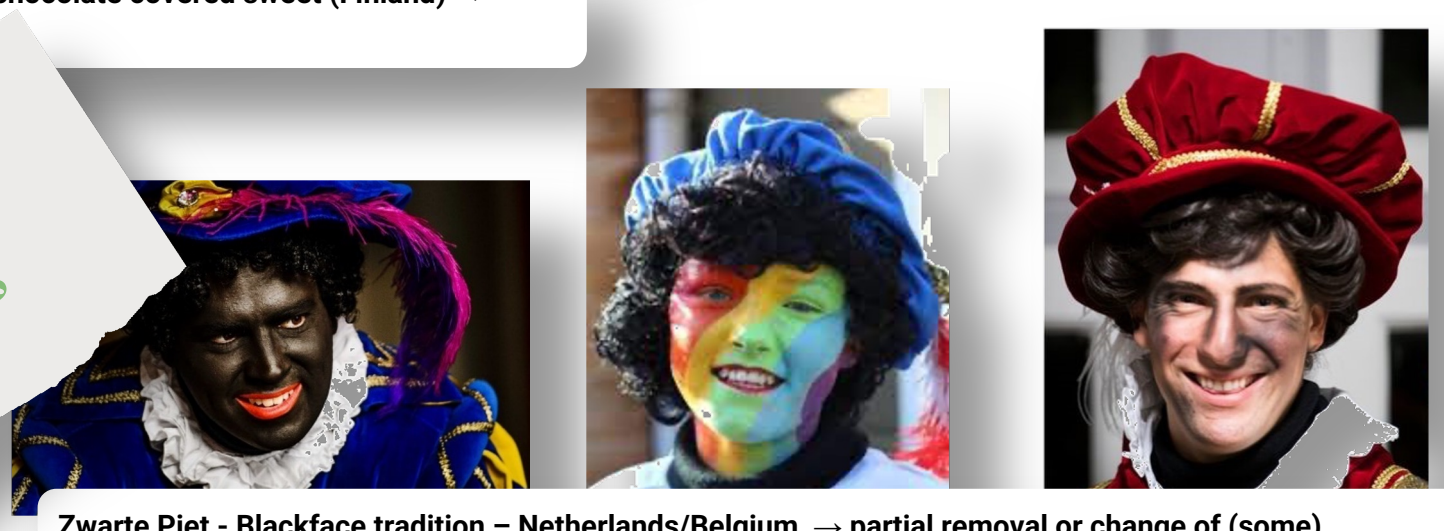
- 1) Investigating changes in CCH in museums → analyzing display, conservation, and research strategies of two museums (BE, IT), with a focus on how these institutions respond to decolonial challenges and resistances, examining negotiation processes around object provenance, restitution, and exhibition choices. Data collection through archival records, interviews (n = 30 per museum) with museum stakeholders, and analysis of both physical and virtual displays, considering narrative framing and museum communication strategies.
- 2) Observational studies and questionnaire surveys (n = 300 per country) on reactions to redesigned exhibitions, focusing on mainly on their perceptions of the museum
- 3) Experimental study (n = 300) on emotional reactions to contested items using excerpts from an ad hoc virtual museum visit

**Changes in CCH: increasing confidence in cultural consumption**

- 1) Studying how youth from ethnic majority and minority backgrounds in Europe perceive and discuss changes in cultural consumption, focusing on whether practices are evolving "too much or too little." → Focus groups: 12 discussions per colonizing country (ethnic majority, minority, and mixed groups) and 4 in Croatia (ethnic majority only), using images of colonial labelled food products traditions to prompt reflection, analyzed via reflexive thematic analysis.
- 2) Surveys with embedded experiments → investigating emotional reactions to products and traditions with colonial symbolism, assessing how different versions (with or without colonial features) impact attitudes across diverse demographic and socio-political groups, to understand variation in responses between ethnic majorities (n = 500) and colonial-origin minorities (n = 500).



**WP4 study** will examine *changes in cultural consumption of products and traditions related to CCH* and focus on how young adults residing in four European countries (NL, BE, IT, HR)



*Preliminary selection of products and traditions*