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Invisible Superstructure of the Visible: Contested Notions of Authorized Order, or How to Render the Kankurang In_Visible

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Invisible Superstructure of the Visible: Contested Notions of Authorized Order, or How to Render the Kankurang In_Visible

_Abstract

This _*Article* investigates debates on visualizations of the Kankurang and offers a new conceptualization of the interrelation of processes of heritagization and in_visibility. "Kankurang" refers both to an initiatory rite of the Mandinka ethnic group associated with the circumcision of young males as well as the spirit at its center. In the rite, the Kankurang chases away unwanted viewers, and traditionally was intended to remain invisible to outsiders. However, the figure has been dragged into the political spotlight in both Senegal and Gambia, as new institutions have intentionally incorporated the rite into their political interests by making Mandinka heritage visible, while at the same time concealing unwanted information. In 2008, the Kankurang initiatory rite was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since then, a documentation center was established in Janjanbureh, Gambia, and in 2018, the Gambian Kankurang was also targeted by the YEP (Youth Empowerment Project), funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF). By revitalizing the Kankurang Festival, the financiers wish to prevent 'irregular immigration' to the EU. In this paper, I reveal the different developments and stances on authorized order on this heritage's in_visibility through visual discourse analysis of the *invisible superstructure*; drawing on phenomenology and Marxist relational space theory, I criticize and theorize the implicated power-imbalances in these developments. In conclusion, I will elaborate two types of invisible superstructure which disclose the conflicting political aims and ethical implications of visualizing the Kankurang.

1_Ontological and Epistemological Paradox of a Heritage's In_Visibility[1]

Bearing two clinking machetes in his hands and emitting a shrill screaming, a man-sized figure covered in red barks chases women and children through the sandy slopes of Ziguinchor, Senegal. This figure represents the Kankurang, the ancestral and guardian spirit of young Mandinka initiates, who are secluded in the sacred forest as they heal from circumcision and learn about the secret knowledge of the Mandinka. During this liminal phase,[2] intended to ensure a boy's safe transition to adulthood,[3] women, non-Mandinka, and the non-initiated are kept at great distance and out of sight by the *Ifambundi* Kankurang.[4] This *Ifambundi* (mande.: 'the one who appears')[5] is a version of the Kankurang associated with circumcision, perceived by Mandinka as a superhumanly and mystical figure, that can turn invisible and walk on overhead power lines.[6] This intangible figure has a very corporeal side to it as embodied by one of the older initiates, who understand the ritual performances and

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secretive knowledge of the Kankurang. The Kankurang Initiatory Rite is regularly celebrated by Mandinka in West Africa.

Formally restricted to Mandinka men, part of the rite is its prohibition of photographs of the liminal phase and the figure. At the same time, the rite—including the figure—has gained popularity in recent years: in 2008, allegedly to counteract its trivialization (such as usage for public festivities) by Senegal and Gambia, the Kankurang was included on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.[7] After the UNESCO inscription, however, a considerable ontological paradox occurred, since the rite is now accessible to outsiders through museum and digital display. I acknowledge this dilemma in my research, which for me—as a white female German sociologist—had its starting point in globally visible images of the rite, in the form of digital and analogue photographs and films mostly spread by national institutions through archiving, museum display, journals and anthropologic articles, and, foremost, websites. At the same time, the actual rite remained inaccessible and thus invisible to me, as I was not able to be present as an eyewitness, and some of the images' meanings at the center of this analysis continue to be hard to decipher for me. Therefore, this research identifies also an epistemological paradox, as visualizations of a sensitive cultural practice and their implicit power imbalances are examined, yet because of what they consist of, and what they represent, they must nevertheless remain invisible.

To Critical Heritage Studies, the UNESCO measures of archiving and display—such as visualizations in museums, and cultural heritage advertising as part of international heritage policies—have a direct impact on the Kankurang rite,[8] fundamentally undermining local and traditional authority, like Mandinka dignitaries. I opt for a more nuanced view and multi-modal reading of these visualizations, which inform different and sometimes contested narratives about who struggles for authorized sovereignty of interpretation of this heritage. I use the term *invisible superstructure*, a concept indicating powerful meaning-making through either actively or purposelessly hiding information that indicates the societal struggles embedded in these visualizations, which thus frames debates about the Kankurang's progressing depiction. The *invisible superstructure* is a helpful concept to raise awareness about the visual (re)production of hegemonies—through and about visualizations of heritage. Heritage is co-constitutive to identity constructions, which

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also tend to be more extensively visualized, and which give the present its meaning through the affective, emotional, and moral recourse to imagined and interpreted past(s). This helps to understand the often hard-fought and emotion-driven debates on aspects of authenticity and sovereignty of interpretation.

To set the frame in this article for a narrow examination of these nuances of the *invisible superstructure*, I first outline multi-faceted heritage debates. Building on these heritage debates, I develop a conceptual framework of the *invisible superstructure* of the visible. For this first step, my main research questions are: What role do visualizations play within local, national, and transnational institutionalized heritage debates? And, which different nuances of in_visibility can be identified here? Next, I apply the delineated debates and subsequent conceptualization of *invisible superstructure* to two case studies, composed of recent website material on the Kankurang by UNESCO and the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF).

This online data comprises internationally accessible pictures, films, and texts, which function to address the institutions' respective aims. To reconstruct the contested visualizations, I use secondary sources, which include inter alia anthropological texts by Ferdinand de Jong, who investigated the Kankurang between 1990 and 2006,[9] and primary sources I gathered during field work in 2017 and 2018, such as the UNESCO application file by Senegal and Gambia as well as archival material and interviews. In my writing, I make space for a multiplicity of perspectives by including the voices of the concerned Mandinka dignitaries, which subvert the ideal of authorized order about UNESCO's or EUTF's depiction of the Kankurang through two distinguishable types of struggle for authorized order of the *invisible superstructure*. In conclusion, both phenomenological and Marxist-based conceptualizations of the *invisible* superstructure of the visible, as well as new considerations regarding the visualization of the Kankurang initiatory rite, can be elucidated within larger debates on intangible cultural heritage in Africa.

2_Three Debates on Becoming Visible

Informed primarily by scholarly work by the Global North over the past decades, the central contention in debates about the Kankurang regards the deterioration of Mandinka heritage caused by its increasing visibility, through widely distributed photos and films of the initiatory rite, as well as folklorized performances enacted for

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profit in front of traditionally rather undesired spectators. These debates, which are also shaped by varying perceptions of the development of mass media, illustrate the ambivalences of (re)making something in_visible: old discourse formations that were only negotiated locally now gain complexity and centrality via the globalization of power relations of showing, displaying, and seeing. Anthropology, heritage, and memory studies respond to the question of 'Who has the right to (re)present and preserve the figure?'[10] in three ways: (1) debates on processes of heritagization of the rite, (2) consideration of the rite's commodification, and (3) examination of the researcher's own role.

(1) Debates on processes of heritagization

Heritagization means the creation and ongoing reshaping of institutionalized heritage and meaning-making processes, which might encompass both the custom-carrier's identity constructions as well as larger societal and scientific discourse. Visualizations and notions of in_visibility play an increasingly important role in how heritage is debated and shaped. From a Global South and Critical Heritage Studies perspective, heritagization reveals power imbalances in the recognition of so-called UNESCO heritage, preservation measures such as standardized museum practices and websites, and also epistemic frameworks like the reification of ethnicity.[11]

Since its implementation in 2003, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (formerly named Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity) has sought to pay special tribute to 'intangible' artifacts and customs from the African continent. In *Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Africa*, director Noriko Aikawa-Faure described the rationale behind their efforts:

> Why are African heritage sites [meaning: World Heritage Sites] less acknowledged internationally? Does it mean that Africa has less cultural heritage than the rest of the world? By no means! It is because most African heritage is expressed in living and oral forms, i.e. it is intangible cultural heritage.[12]

When the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) List emerged in 2008, however, many critics from the Global North immediately raised concerns about its objectives. In *Uses of Heritage* (2006), Laurajane Smith, the co-founder of the

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Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS), coined the term *Authorized Heritage Discourse* (AHD),[13] which describes the power imbalances between Western cultures' concepts of heritage versus those of non-Western cultures, as well as conflicts between state heritage agencies and local communities. Dividing heritage into material culture in one location, and non-material culture in another, Smith argues, only reproduces global dichotomies and inequalities. The ACHS criticizes World Heritage Lists for selecting some cultural expressions with 'outstanding value' and protecting them over others that are not given that designation,[14] while aiming to preserve this heritage almost exclusively via documentation and exhibition.[15] In line with this perspective, critics of the ICH Convention also feared how bearers of cultural heritage would now additionally be expected to engage in practices of archiving and promoting their heritage, adding to it a 'second order meaning.'[16] According to the ACHS, this 'metacultural production'[17] would then constitute a new set of cultural practices that alienate the custom-bearers from the lived nature of their culture and engage them instead in outwardly directed museification policies.[18] Eventually, according to ethnologists Vladimir Hafstein and linguist Stefan Willer, such intervention will ultimately result in culture being 'frozen.'[19]

> UNESCO's programs are about change—they intervene in social processes in order to change them. Safeguarding itself constitutes change it is a change in relations. […] [It] transforms the ways in which communities relate to their practices, incorporating them into a patrimonial regime. And ultimately, intangible heritage also transforms the communities themselves.[20]

Thus, transfer from one medial sphere (e.g., oral tradition) to another (pictures, videos in a museum) is viewed as an absurdity that will eventually alter the customs and societies themselves. Indeed, how and in what ways museum representations and digital displays have practically influenced communities and their perceptions of their heritage remains to be proven. But rather than viewing the UNESCO inscription as a dead end of heritage, I argue that it may instead open up space for making their visualizations' ambiguous and disputed nature visible.

Further, the debates about ICH surfaced another perpetuated an unwanted dichotomy between oral literature and traditional cultures on the one side, and national heritage and written culture on the other. In Western scholarly debate it is not self-evident that heritage relies heavily on non-written sources. Nigerian philosopher Victor Ahamefule Anoka writes that African oral history and tradition in comparison

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to *written* culture were until very recently perceived in Western scholarly tradition as deficient.[21] Scripture was understood to cast 'history' into two sociohistorical phases,[22] wherein canonical texts ultimately replace ritual repetition.[23] This image substantiated the European belief in an 'ahistorical' *Africa*, "which perpetuates unhelpful divisions such as the distinction between 'developed' and 'non-developed' societies,"[24] that are "contemporaneous but distant geographically."[25] In reaction to these derogatory misconceptions, Anoka introduces the term 'oral literature,' emphasizing the sociability and continuity of orally transmitted knowledge, which gives historical meaning to communities.[26] So, while a rite may be undoubtedly historic, any idealized state of this rite must be viewed as the *current* meaning-making of heritage through oral literature, as relied upon, for example, by the Mandinka.

Thus, the debates on African heritage have to be read against the background of Eurocentric attributions of medial spheres, cultural memory, identity constructions, and notions of modernity. Indeed, notions of modernity as bound to written culture and the nation state had repercussions on the disciplines dealing with collective identity and heritagization *about* Africa, but also deeply affected the disciplines' perspectives *in* Africa. Who theorized about African heritage and identity, and in what manner, was never detachable from the imperative self-positioning of African scholars toward oral or written data, methods, empiricism, and theory-building. Sociologist Elisio Macamo writes:

> For reasons that had to do with the way in which Africa had become an objective of scientific interest and also the objective historical condition under which modernity became an issue in the continent, most intellectuals developed a critical attitude towards modernity in general. Indeed, intellectuals either sought to recover a sense of identity presumed lost in the wake of colonialism or they challenged the representation of Africa and its assumption as truth revelation.[27]

This double European bias still reverberates today in how meaning is given to heritagization processes: either through re-enchanting colonial resilience, or by the struggle to ground any meaning-giving on *written* sources from colonizers. Further, between the negotiated implications of oral and written accounts on heritagization debates in Africa, and the discussions on media as co-constitutive for scholarly discourse, visualizations seemed to have taken a back seat.

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But then, at the transition to the new millennium, global digitalization was viewed as a new paradigm of modernity. Digitalization was both seen as a tool of global and equal distribution of development, and also as a wave that would finally sweep out all traditional cultures as electronic mass media came to "compel the transformation of everyday discourse."[28] As Vladimir Hafstein wrote, these menaces of globalization underlined "an ominous picture of deterioration, disappearance, and destruction"[29] to cultural expressions. Specifically the possibility of digital visual reproduction, is raised as a thread in the application to UNESCO by the Senegalese and Gambian heritage institutions for the Kankurang rite's inclusion on their ICH list, which states: "The typically oral character of the Kankurang is a source of fragility and vulnerability in the face of the threats posed by NICT [New Information and Communication Technologies], which are capable of putting scenes online that were hitherto only accessible to initiates."[30] However, the 'safeguarding' practices that use photographs on websites to illustrate the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention were never disputed neither by the applicants nor by the UNESCO ICH Commission.

The respective Senegalese and Gambian executive institutes responsible for heritage and monument preservation affiliated with the Ministries of Culture—the *Direction du Patrimoine Culturel* (DPC) of Senegal, and the *National Center for Arts and Culture* (NCAC) of Gambia—submitted an application file to UNESCO in 2004 with the aim of putting an end to the Kankurang rite's deterioration.[31] They named several Mandinka dignitaries as informants for the oral literature of the Kankurang.[32] According to these elders, the Kankurang originated from the province of Kaabu of the empire of Mali. Though it had been preserved since "the beginning of time,"[33] before colonialism reshaped the social structures of West African cultures,[34] it was now threatened with disappearance.[35] In addition to the testimony of the Mandinka dignitaries, the file relies on early written accounts from British explorer Mungo Park (1795)[36] and Major William Gray, who on an expedition in West Africa also made a lithograph of a Jamba-Jabally, a type of-Kankurang associated with the delivery of messages and dispute resolutions (1818).[37] Using these European accounts as historical 'facts' caters to the Eurocentric position that assumes the deficiency of African oral traditions, in which historicity would be unverifiable through oral accounts only. Simultaneously, historic European encounters are contested in debates on heritagization on the continent because of their obviously implicated colonial

matrix. Thus, there is constant ambiguity regarding what might possibly constitute 'historical accuracy' in describing the Kankurang. For example, although the European accounts explicitly mentioned the Kankurang rite is intended to "[keep] the women in awe,"[38] anthropologist Ferdinand de Jong criticized that the file's portrayal of the rite actually *hides* its violence[39] (especially against women)[40] and its intergenerational conflict.[41] From a Eurocentric stance, the Kankurang rite constitutes a multiply contested heritage, particularly in regards to the children's and women's rights that were at least partially concealed in the application file.[42] Indeed, anthropologists' critical examinations of the UNESCO file assert that unwanted and contested sides to this heritage are treated uncritically or information are being *hidden*.

As an oral tradition, according to the interpretation provided by Mandinka elders, the Kankurang rite was also popularly viewed as a counterreaction to the postcolonial nation state. Anthropologists from the Global North have disclosed the reshaping of heritage processes of the Kankurang rite[43] as a source of identity and pride for the Mandinka, referencing an ideal state of the rite of the past wherein the Kankurang figure was in direct confrontation with persons who embodied colonial rule.[44] For example, one story much-touted throughout West Africa took place in colonial Portuguese Guinea-Bissau in the 1950s, where the *Ifambundi* appeared and executed the district's prefect after he had severely and unjustly punished the Mandinka Community.[45] This story is still used to underpin the importance, resilience, and historicity of the rite, reminding Mandinka youth of this ideal state of the Kankurang in its ability to reinstall local power over postcolonial asymmetries.

These narratives about the ideal state of heritage are shaped very differently in the two postcolonial nation states of Senegal and Gambia. In the emerging postcolonial Senegalese state of the 1960s, the Kankurang rite experienced a phase of desacralization as it was subjected to wider visual reproduction. During that time, the rite was supposedly stripped of all secretive and sacred meaning; it took place only irregularly, and caused violent clashes and much unrest against police forces, especially in growing multi-ethnic urban spaces.[46] In the 1980s, however, culture shifted, and with the help of the *Négritude* movement of Senegal's first president, Leopold Sedar Senghor, who especially emphasized his country's arts production, heritage, and tradition,[47] the Kankurang was revived, which made him "part of a

distinctly national culture."[48] Despite this governmental support, however, attributions caught on among the general public that the Kankurang was a violent figure, especially against the police.[49] Current oral literature about the Kankurang is superimposed by Senegalese media coverage of violent clashes between the figure and other inhabitants of urban areas,[50] since the rite's procession interferes with other city dwellers' everyday lives.[51] In the city of Ziguinchor these clashes were so severe that they led to injunctions between local police forces and elders, including a four-year ban of the rite, which were also published in the local press.[52] For the first time, deprived of their privilege to rule over the figure and rite's cyclic repetition, Mandinka elders turned to the government to ask for substantial technical and financial support to preserve their heritage from further deterioration.

This narrative of resilience against state powers seems to be far less pertinent in Gambia, due to the Kankurang's vast touristic commodification over a period of many decades.[53] Thus, a more nuanced view of the entanglements between heritagization processes, their visual representations,[54] and the countries' respective ethnic majorities is beneficial. For example, the Senegalese Mandinka, a minority group, perceive the *Ifambundi* as the "visible sign of the invisible,"[55] and they handle the rite with restrictive and even exclusionistic care. Gambian Mandinka, who constitute a majority group, conversely use the figure extensively for public displays such as national heritage festivities (e.g. Roots-Festival). Clearly, thus, considerations about museum and digital display of the Kankurang are conducted very differently in relation to national setting.[56] Scholarly discourses on the processes of heritagization therefore relate to the Kankurang's two respective and diverse institutional framings: as national heritage, presumably based on majority-minority interdependences, and as oral literature referring to resilience against colonial rule, or more generally against governmental authority.[57]

Next to these more detailed observations, scientific debates at the time of the processes of UNESCO ICH development seemed to portray the juxtaposition of rite and UNESCO heritagization side by side, rather than as the institutional visualizations' one-sided and irrevocable influence upon the rite. I, on the other hand, want to argue that Authorized Heritage Discourse, criticizing ICH, actually reproduces the power imbalances that it strives to overcome. Because it excludes a perspective on capable and self-reflexive institutions and community members of the

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Global South—as they are only portrayed as passive receivers of UNESCO measures—AHD remarginalizes the perspectives of self-governing community members, which could themselves subvert or actively hide information, as in the case of the Kankurang website.[58] Further, the concept of alienation from 'lived nature' through visual representation is deeply rooted in Western ideals about ocularcentric societies, which can hardly be transferred to other cultural contexts. That is to say, the central point of argument of AHD—about showing, displaying, and seeing being integral to any heritage's role in globalized power relations—tends to be overemphasized in the Global North, but shows considerable limitations in regard to non-Western societies and the complexities of the postcolonial state. In non-European contexts, the ACHS fails to provide evidence of the extent to which visualizations of UNESCO, and thus the nation states, cater to the transformative nature of otherwise 'authentic' cultural expressions.

Hence, processes of heritagization are variously debated. Eurocentric biases within debates on African historicity, memory, modernity, and digitalization can be criticized for their own uncritical stance towards their perspectives on non-European cultures and epistemic partiality. A more nuanced look provides insight about the two nation-states' UNESCO ICH application process, and how the nostalgia of an idealized state of the rite can produce considerable limitations to its discussion, including the silencing of a number of relevant facts, such as the rite's structural violence against women. Lastly, questions are raised about the Association of Critical Heritage Studies' critique of the visualizations produced by national heritage agencies and how much impact these actually have on the *ritual coherence* of the rite.[59]

(2) Debating the rite's commodification

At the same time that the Kankurang rite was added to the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Critical Heritage Studies began engaging in heavy and often divergent debates about the consequences of heritagization by UNESCO. Site management requirements, the regulation of tourism, and the commodification of culture[60] were yet again cited as substantially threatening traditions,[61] since cultural tourism and heritage marketing both function through visual regimes that would inevitably lead to the Kankurang's increased visibility. Over time, however, the

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Critical Heritage Studies argument shifted from demanding rigorous invisibility for the rite, to conditions that would allow for both the rite's heritagization *and* its visual commodification. This reshaping of the rite had different actors and varied in Senegal and Gambia.

Prior to the UNESCO inscription, Gambian national festivities had already frequently featured the Kankurang as a performed masquerade.[62] Such masquerades —which use the Kankurang as a source of nationhood,[63] at national parades,[64] or to demand donations from tourists and locals alike[65]—also increasingly began appearing in Senegal. Senegalese Mandinka elders in Ziguinchor first openly opposed these public displays, asserting that they were partially responsible for the deterioration of the Kankurang in the 1980s.[66] At the center of these disputes were the increasingly commodified performances that made the performed Kankurang visible to outsiders. Anthropologists like Ferdinand de Jong also picked up the argument that payments by spectators from other ethnic groups and/or international tourists were an expression of the rite's progressive commodification, meaning that the 'aura' of the rite was lost.[67]

At the same time, new practices of the Senegalese youth opposed the objectification of the rite by the tourists' gazes. In their Kankurang performances, young Senegalese men would now include playful acts of defiance of or resistance by mimicking anthropologists, sociologists, or journalists; mirroring the spectators' ascribed habits and their sensationalism toward the rite, these men turned the gaze back upon their viewers.[68] As such, it was not so much the outsiders' visual representations of the rite, but the performers' own visual practices that had a consequential effect on the rite's performances. In the light of these observations, by 2013, Ferdinand de Jong also changed the tone of his argument, suggesting that instead of simply dismissing Senegalese Kankurang masquerades as inauthentic, one should grasp the latest performances as entanglements of culture and commodification, "not as two opposed entities, but interdependencies."[69] Even Mandinka elders began to cease questioning the local and national appropriations of the Kankurang as a source of collective identity, but now simply blamed the figures' exposure on UNESCO.

Marketing (through visualizing) the Kankurang as an internationally recognizable heritage posed threats of a new scale, because now anyone globally could access and see the rite and figure.[70] The UNESCO websites were also challenged by Critical

Heritage Studies for their beautified pictures and their aim to showcase the exemplary, seemingly cohesive traditions at the same time that they silenced the alternative voices and problems, such as 'intergenerational tensions,' that these cultural traditions often face.[71] Stefan Willer stated, for example: "The fact that there could be a contradiction between new creation and tradition is not even formulated."[72] One hugely debated point is therefore the argument about the sincerity and authenticity of the website's visualizations.

Site management, such as local museums built according to western museum practices, yielded further skepticism.[73] Since the rite's UNESCO inscription, two documentation centers had been established. In 2010, the *Espace Kankourang* opened in Mbour, Senegal, only to close again after four years.[74] Mamadou Mané, historian and co-author of the UNESCO application file, specified that the museum's location in Mbour was chosen among Senegalese cities with a strong Mandinka population because of its still vibrant execution of the "authentic rite."[75] However, in an interview with me in 2017, Mandinka elder Abdoulayé Sidibé of Ziguinchor emphasized that Mbour's Kankurang had already deteriorated, and a museum could only be viewed as an expression of this insincerity.[76] The debate about the museum in Mbour ceased soon after its closure, catering to the impression—very much to the frustration of former curator Sadibou Dabo—that the cultural marketing of the Kankurang as UNESCO ICH in Senegal is delayed.[77] In Dabo's view, the closure actually better served the argument of more traditionalist Mandinka dignitaries, who altogether oppose the visibility of the rite as an internationally recognizable heritage.[78] The majority of Mbour's Mandinka community is now in favor of using a site made available to the community as another seclusion house for the Initiatory rite rather than a museum building.[79]

Conversely, the opening in 2016 of the *Kankurang Documentation Center* (hereafter: KDC) in Janjanbureh, Gambia, was in line with a locally installed Committee led to considerable international marketing, e.g. as part of the pan African 'Roots-Festival.'[80] Hence, the National Center for Arts and Culture (NCAC) and the Ministry of Tourism not only valorized the museum display, but also performed masquerades as a strong national narrative, which they then marketed internationally, especially to 'the diaspora' in the Americas. The KDC is near the Tuyangsita sacred site on the outskirts of the city of Janjanbureh, a large sandy space that serves as a

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gathering place during circumcision. The KDC consists of four buildings, one serving as a museum display of the Kankurang alongside traditional ritual masks of Gambia and West Africa. So far, no conflict has arisen about the display, nor the KDCs' location.

While the commodification of masked performances in urban regions of Gambia has been embraced as a strong, internationally renowned national-heritage narrative,[81] the debates about the Senegalese Kankurang's deteriorating state perpetuates even the further economization of the rite. All in all, the contesting stances of marketing the Kankurang as a national and internationally renowned heritage reveal a shift, at least in Senegalese debates, from strict invisibility towards a more inclusive stance that recognizes commodification and heritage as interdependent.

(3) Ethical implications of the researcher's own viewpoints and positions

This heritage's notions of in_visibility demands reflecting on the ethical and political implications of the researcher's positionality. My point of view as a white female German sociologist brings along certain epistemological and local-historical assumptions that should be negotiated in regard to a likewise ethically and morally restricted field of study.[82] This positionality yields delicate questions about the ethical limitations of scientific interest and sufficient rationalization to ground one's own interest in the Kankurang.

Historically, white male western scholars have been attracted by the figure's secrecy. First descriptions date from explorers, such as the British Francis Moore in 1744, Mungo Park in 1795, and Gray and Dochard in 1818,[83] or from Catholic missionaries and eventually anthropologists. They all had their fair struggles with the Kankurang. As the French Catholic priest Doutrémepuich tried to interfere in the 'diabolic' practices in 1939, he was mocked by the guardians, and told to complain to the authorities in Dakar or Paris.[84] More recently, Ferdinand de Jong also had several unpleasant encounters with guardians of the Kankurang. While trying to photograph a performance, his camera was taken from him, and was only regained through patient negotiations by his assistant.[85] He rationalized his experience afterwards as part of the restoration of secrecy and 'aura,' since his photographs did not turn out too well and a depiction of a blurry figure seemed to have reestablished the myth once more.[86] On

another occasion, while de Jong conducted research in Marsassoum, "some young men threatened to kill anyone who agreed to talk to [him],"[87] and he had to leave town. These attempts to 'know' by seeing and documenting highlight the entanglement of power and colonialization, and how deeply the urge to see is intertwined with the urge to know. So, to me, certain visual scientific practices seem to perpetuate power imbalances in regard to the rite's in_visibility.

Therefore, I turned my own research around the questions of what knowledge about visual productions of the Kankurang were accessible to me, today, as a white female sociologist from Germany, and how I could participate in a critical stance towards the aforementioned debates, which grounded my interest in the Kankurang's increased visibility in the first place. It became a phase of self-reflection on my own Eurocentric-biased assumptions about heritage and the role of museums and international institutions, as well as questioning my personal endeavor while researching something I would never be able to 'see.' Therefore, I choose to work with visualizations that were already globally accessible through UNESCO and EUTF, and to contextualize them with interviews of informants as well as action plans and reports. However, the visualizations already posed an epistemological dilemma, since they reproduce strong imagery from political agencies who wish to get their respective messages across. That is why I apply the concept of *invisible superstructure*, derived from the examination of the term in_visibility, to lift the beautified images out of their logic of reproduction and challenge them with the various ambiguities that unfold in the debates. Also, as I was trying not to cross demarcation lines, and all of my interviewees first freely informed me about their views on the museums and websites, I also had to learn how to handle silence, abrupt change of mood, and even rebukes after my 'improper' expression of certain words.[88] However, the question that weighed most heavily on me was: what right did I have to interrogate custom bearers and museum administrators and staff about visualizations, which represented something they either knew nothing about themselves or what they were not allowed to speak to me about? Or, as elder Sidibé said: "Well, I said to myself, she comes from Germany all the way to research something she has absolutely no idea about. Maybe tomorrow some young [Gambian] men go to Germany, and investigate there."[89] So, in conclusion, although it was not *intentioned*,

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I undoubtedly naively reproduced asymmetrical power relations that go beyond questions of visibility and heritagization.

Another question was: what knowledge production would be accessible to me, if I strove to respect the moral and ethical boundaries of the communities, in regard to any visualization? What would I be able to describe and analyze? And lastly, how could the 'Authorized Heritage Discourse' serve as a focal point of my own Eurocentric bias and questions of authorized order? Whose struggles can be addressed by the visualizations? The Mandinka elders, who claimed back control over the Kankurang? Women and youth? National institutions asserting a former oral tradition as a national heritage? Or the supranational organizations, such as UNESCO, with their specific requirements of standardized museum practices, mainly informed by a Northern Theory stance? These problems cannot be resolved in their totality, but the case study will raise awareness of some of the underlying aspects. My research poses a relatively new approach towards these underlying tensions, which might only become of greater interests for researchers of heritagization processes. The three subsections on heritagization debates, heritage commodification and moral-ethnical boundaries of research are the background against which the following analysis takes place.

3_Websites as Artefacts and Visual Discourse Analysis

The starting point of this case study is not a corpus linguistics, but visualizations,[90] which also pays tribute to a larger shift toward the visual in social sciences more generally.[91] Two websites about the Kankurang from different institutions—UNESCO and the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), financing the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) in Gambia—are the artifacts at the core of the analysis. Websites are often representations of certain aspects of the world that are interwoven with current (sometimes scientific) knowledge production. However, websites are not scientific texts. Although that could be technically possible, and transparency about time, location, and authorship could always be provided, most websites follow a corporate design that generates opacity. Other than a webnography purely restricted to online content, I apply a visual discourse analysis, integrating other source material to especially point out conflicting interests, when showing the websites to interviewees.

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The two case studies represent an approach that is sensitive to the above-mentioned moral and ethical restrictions, and will be critically reflected in regard to the designated three debates on heritage, which were based on the following questions: What role do visualizations play within local, national, and international heritage debates? And which nuances of in_visibility can be identified? The close comparison of these visualizations embedded within larger debates on 'modernity' and 'digitalization' in Africa manifests the contradictory notions of the Kankurang's institutionalized visible side as well as deep-rooted epistemic inequalities. The struggle of Senegalese Mandinka for an ideal state of the rite, traditionally being a figure of resilience against state authority, also is made clear. The websites' analysis will further interrogate whose political interests in claiming authorized sovereignty over these visualizations are subverted by actions of other actors in the field.

Hence, I apply visual discourse analysis to the two websites of UNESCO and EUTF, which highlights "the social institutions and practices through which images are made and displayed."[92] As images do not speak for themselves, and neither are they in a vacuum, but are embedded in contextual knowledge—digital properties such as size, date, intertext through subtitles on websites and links, etc.—the analysis also accentuates the bureaucratic structures and technical details of pictures and footage, as well as affordances through mouse-overs, which contribute to the two agencies' self-understanding. Therefore the websites are framed by their discursive context of emergence and display, since "these makings and uses are crucial to the meanings an image carries."[93] In addition to the websites, ethnographic material, reports, action plans, and interviews I collected during my PhD research in 2017 and 2018—prior to the COVID-19-pandemic—form a secondary data corpus for the visual discourse analysis.[94] Methodologically, I orient myself to Roswitha Breckner's segment analysis,[95] which allows both a critical examination of one's own perception and interpretation of visualizations, as well as a combination with discourse analysis.[96] Thus, the applied analysis to both websites grasps them as structured text with multitudinous multimedia elements, such as text, images, and audio-visual material as part of the intertextuality of discourse. These elements are in part or in their totality equally components of other linked scientific or media coverage.[97] This includes linked information to subpages or hyperlinks, as well as scientific articles and archival material, but also to my own ethnographic observations and interviews from

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field research. This visual discourse analysis conveys this heritage's visualizations by critical multimodal and multi-directional reading as constituents of a large web of significances and nuances of in_visibility.

According to Walter Mignolo, empirically deducted assumptions of non-Western case studies from a European cultural background have to be challenged.[98] As such, the case study's findings, deductions, and abstractions need to be positioned as particular, not universal. My source material of globally accessible visualizations poses a danger of reproducing an authorized perspective on both national curating institutions—the Senegalese Direction de Patrimoine Culturel (DPC) and the Gambian National Center for Arts and Culture (NCAC), but also development agencies, like EUTF. Consequently, local voices are added, illustrating discursive visualizations of ICH and EUTF as their multifaceted struggles for in_visibility.

4_Conceptualizing the Invisible Superstructure of the Visible

In coordination with the findings of my visual discourse analysis, I develop a concept of *invisible superstructure*, based on phenomenology and relational space theory in a Marxist stance, which outlines the implications of the two case studies as a more nuanced interplay of invisibility *in* visibility. Both concepts are applicable in accordance with one another, since relational space theory by sociologist Martina Löw draws on Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre's production of social space, whose considerations were also based on phenomenology.[99]

In a Marxist sense, a divide exists between a haptic sphere of societal reproduction (base) and an intangible sphere of culture, norms, and identity constructions (superstructure).[100] To Marx, both base and superstructure are also bound to the political sphere and the nation state's governing apparatus, as the base is the place where the elites' power manifests itself, and the superstructure grows out of that base. Because of the ambiguity of visualizations, I argue, these material reproductions (base) can also serve to portray the struggle to power thus the *invisible superstructure* by the ruling actors and their imagery of nationhood. Therefore, the superstructure unravels the struggle to maintain the elite's sovereignty over the visualizations' interpretation. In my reading, the base is what we see, like institutional websites; the superstructure, which needs to be made accessible, consists of ideologies maintained in social roles such as family, religious groups, or art, but also societal roles in

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politics, science, media, and education.[101] The *invisible superstructure* is therefore always implicated in institutionalized visualizations, but possible struggles for power need to be unveiled by adding further sources from oral and written accounts. To elaborate on why I chose this conceptual clarification of the invisibility of superstructure:

French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty wrote in 1960: "The visible is not an objective positive, the invisible cannot be a negation on the logical sense."[102] Therefore, I argue, there is not a shift from visible to invisible, but the term invisibility needs to be read as the *will* to invisibility. In the sense of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in_visibility could be regarded as a fundamental dialectical process from one extrapolation to another. At both ends we find extremes, meaning the physical and psychological un_awareness of 'a thing.' Visibility would then entail both the bodily capacities of the viewer, and her/his ability to process 'a thing' becoming a *meaningful* object.[103] To Merleau-Ponty, 'the thing' can only become apparent when included in operative speech or regimes of display—thus making it accessible to others. Consequently, the term invisibility is utopian, indicating something outside the operative speech. It would entail something that no one has been aware of, or, on a second degree, that 'the thing' was not transferred into a system of meaning and thus was never spoken about; therefore 'it' cannot evolve nor transcend.[104] I give another example, when speaking about loss. Loss cannot be enumerated, calculated, visualized, but the absence of 'a thing,' *we* have once been aware of, *we* have once seen or touched, *we* have spoken or heard about, and which has entered *our* system of meaning, can be nostalgically grieved. As philosopher Jörg Paulus writes, "Reflected back on everyday cultural practices, we then become aware of how strongly the historical chain of reference of collecting is linked to elementary cultural techniques [...]. Both [...] aim at the accumulation of what exists, not of losses [...]."[105] So when I refer to the *invisible superstructure* of the visible, I don't refer to the utopian state of invisibility. I refer to the active concealment, hiding or purposeless omissions of debates by powerful actors, whose will to invisibility can be *made visible* and *be given a name*. So, interrogating a visible object brings forth an overarching context, or *invisible superstructure*, pointing out powerful agencies and their intentions.

Invisible superstructure, then, always unveils the struggle for authorized order,[106] meaning the purposeful or purposeless hiding of an object's contested nature—like the depiction of the Kankurang.[107] For example, if the thing remains '*hidden*,' this can be an act of consciously but also purposelessly deceiving others from making the object available to their perception and thus interpretation. This is for instance the case with the depiction of the Kankurang's ritual procession of circumcision. This sphere is seen and interpreted only by the men involved who have chosen to conceal the rite's visible facet and thus prevent accessibility to others, even, as will be shown, to national or transnational heritage organizations. To hide something, to keep it a secret, is an act of enormous effort. Therefore, secrets are equally co-constitutive for knowledge production.[108] The *invisible superstructure* of the visible, is therefore very much defined by motivation and intentionality, or by societal struggles of why something is *unintentionally* or *actively* hidden. I therefore suggest the term *invisible superstructure* of the visible, in a Marxist stance, to make it applicable to the visual discourse analysis.

If we hence come to think of *invisible superstructure* as a non-utopian but very concrete manifestation of visualizations, this concept is applicable to relational space theory. Then, it can be presumed that the *invisible superstructure* can also be conceptualized as a process of rendering societal struggles visible, thus it ascribes and organizes space and time, as well as social order.[109] According to Löw, social space is both constituted by synthesis and spacing. Synthesis is the process by which people communicate about perceived and remembered space, whereas spacing means the concrete relational positioning of people in relation to other people, objects, and their environments.[110] Therefore, as the *invisible superstructure* is a processual topos of synthesizing societal order, this delineates a key element of describing sociospatial and sociotemporal arrangements in these visualizations. I therefore apply this methodological step to interrogate the *invisible superstructure*, which will surface different notions, like socio-territorial expansions of the nation state, but also the urban-rural divide, or cyclic versus linear time, which are informed by these societal struggles found in visualizations.

A re-thought phenomenology on social space,[111] overcoming a longstanding vision from the colonial power matrix through Marxist thought,[112] should therefore echo questions on the viewers' positionality, and what roles language, race, gender,

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sexuality, and age play when we see 'things.'[113] So, from this point of departure, looking into websites of the Kankurang from heritage policy and development agencies, the analysis and abstractions construe a certain particularity. As such, analyzing visible data and their *invisible superstructure* can only succeed in combination with contextual knowledge. The *invisible superstructure* allows us to ask: What *should* remain invisible to whom? Which powerful visual regimes resonate through these visualizations? Whose visual practices are subverted by other actors in the field?

5_Struggles for In_Visibility—Two Case Studies

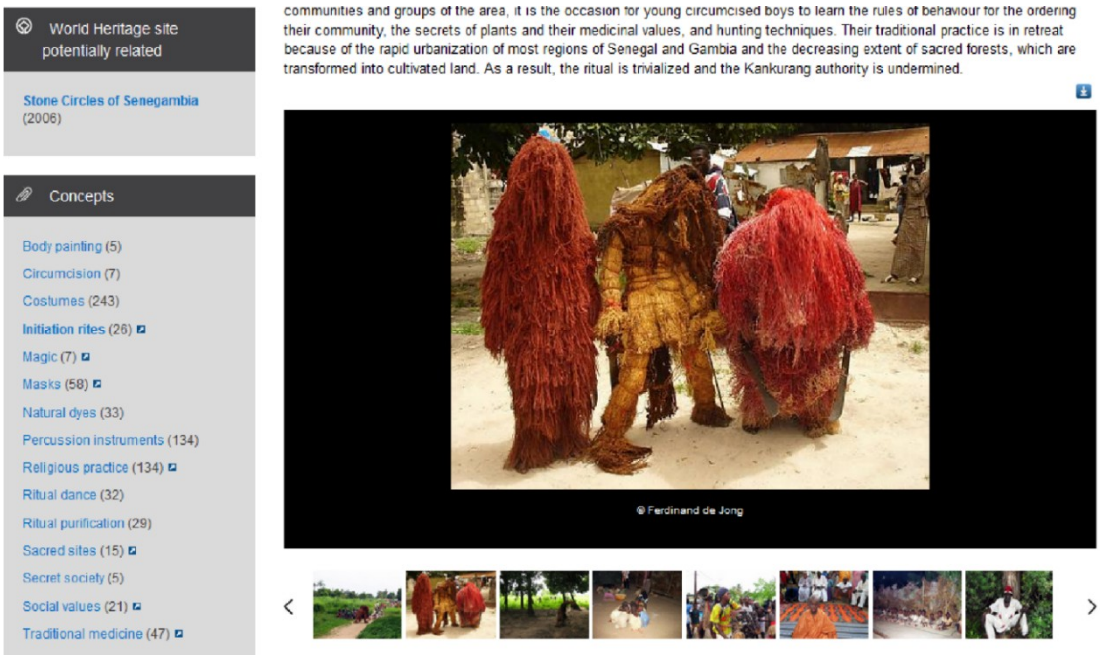

Fig. 1: Detail Kankurang, Manding Initiatory Rite | Image: UNESCO-ICH[114]

Hamady Bocoum's gaze wanders over a print-out of the UNESCO website on the Kankurang Initiatory Rite and he says: "Those images lie somewhere between the esoteric and the exoteric […]. We had permission from the locals to take photos. But technically, these are stolen images."[115] Bocoum, who was executive director of the Senegalese Direction de Patrimoine Culturel (DPC) at the time of the UNESCO application, conjured the authenticity of the picture and footage in an interview in 2017 (see, figure 1). Trying to restore his institution's credibility visibly troubled him. The formal prohibition of the rite was obviously undermined by the DPC to pay justice to the UNESCO measures of documentation and display. At the same time, the rite shouldn't be depicted and the implausible authenticity of images of the UNESCO

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website led him to attempt to cast the rite into different spheres, whereby he referred to the scenes as 'authentic' depictions of the visible or esoteric side of the rite. According to Bocoum, the camera team was able to comfortably record the Kankurang[116] in collaboration with Ziguinchor's population. Bocoum also granted me access to photographs that were not chosen for or embedded in the official gallery of UNESCO's website. In interlinkage with these unpublished photographs, my analysis allowed the conclusion that all videographic and photographic material was taken in 2004 in Ziguinchor and unanimously approved by the elders at that time. This was later on confirmed by the son of deceased elder Nfaly Kabo.[117] Coulaty Kabo, whom I identified through other informants as one of the depicted musicians in the visualizations of the UNESCO website,[118] said, that after the elder's approval a contract with the DPC was signed the very day of the staged Kankurang, which he recalls as a joyous event that even women and children attended. This statement calls into question the DPC's credibility, since the rite now visible on the UNESCO website was staged for the camera team. All the dignitaries whom I interviewed in Ziguinchor and Mbour approved of this critique. Elder Abdoulayé Sidibé from Ziguinchor even openly opposed the website's imagery and said, that the pictures were staged by other ethnic groups and that "the identity card of *our* Kankurang and the identity card of the UNESCO's Kankurang are not identical."[119]

According to Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), national agencies always reproduce power imbalances between local communities and the nation state. The example of the DPC's struggle to reinstall the authenticity of the visualizations inverts this logic, since local dignitaries challenge not only their methods of filming a Kankurang rite in 2004, but also their current claims to the visualizations' authenticity.

By contrasting elements of the UNESCO ICH website with the depictions and texts from the application file for the Kankurang rite's inclusion as a *Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage* from 2005, it becomes evident that they are congruent.[120] The Senegalese DPC submitted the application file in French along with video material and photographs from Senegal only.[121] A small selection is now showcased in the layout and logic of the UNESCO ICH website. Interrogating the *invisible superstructure* of the website, UNESCO, although calling the Kankurang a 'multi-national heritage,' features no video footage or pictures of Gambia. When

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interviewed in 2017, director Hassoum Ceesay of the NCAC specified that he could not himself explain why Gambia was cut out of the picture despite being mentioned in the text and despite its rich oral archival material, containing both audio and visual data, which dates back as far as 1946.[122] At the very least, it did not seem he was included in choosing which visualizations would appear on the website. Gambia remains *hidden*, or actively concealed; UNESCO's website produces an abbreviated and abstract picture of the rite from the Senegalese DPC's perspective alone.

Another example illustrates the *invisible superstructure* intentionally hiding information that could supply contextual knowledge. One picture stands out among others in the gallery element of the website due to its differing camera technology and quality, but also its overall staging. In the photograph, three Kankurang, one dressed in traditional bark fibers, two manufactured from sisal rice bags, are line up for a long shot, while women calmly observe the scene from the background (see figure 1). The image's caption on the website simply reads '©Ferdinand de Jong.' In his article *Le secret exposé*, however, where de Jong first publicized the image, he clarifies further: "Three Kankurang pose for the photographer in Ziguinchor, 2004."[123] This caption is crucial: with it, de Jong clearly underlines the staged nature of the image. That same photograph that de Jong uses to illustrate the debate on the rite's progressing commodification is featured on UNESCO's website with the contextualizing information remaining *hidden* could easily leave the uninformed viewer with the impression that the website's gallery features a collection of sincere and 'outstanding' visual examples of the Kankurang—an impression that is clearly inherently problematic.

Looking at the spatiotemporal constructions of the visualizations, the choice and selection of element on the UNESCO website is displaying a *rural* rite, with '*unmodern*' and ultimately *collectivizing* features. The pictures handed over by Bocoum that were *not* selected for the website, on the other hand, catered to the impression that visualizations exclusively depict the rite set near sacred forests or sparsely populated rural areas. From the interviews with Coulaty Kabo and other informants, the embedded video material on the website, although filmed in the city of Ziguinchor, only tends to show sequences of greens, forests, slopes but effectively no cars, electricity lines, and or other indicators of 'modernity.' Post-production on the videographic material added to this impression of a rural and collective rite by

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cutting out sequences of the individual stories of elder Nfaly Kabo or an initiate's father, contemplating financial hardship after the festivities.[124] The video now exclusively shows the festivities in bright daylight at Ziguinchor's periphery, as well as young initiates at night with their dancing guardians. The voiceover indicates a cyclical repetition of the rite and describes the Mandinka's cosmological worldview. In contrast to the description of how the Kankurang had been subjected to court hearings or bans throughout Senegal at the time of the rite's UNESCO inscription, the website's mention of cyclic repetition seems to be a bit of a stretch. Additionally, no allusion is made on the website to the rite's performance in urban settings, nor to the interconnected and more pressing questions concerning diversely identifying ethnic groups or problems like violence and 'intergenerational tensions,'[125] that were already well-established disputes at that time (see subsection_2). As Hafstein wrote, UNESCO seeks to evoke the idea that tradition is challenged by modernity and globalization.[126] To invoke nation states as the actors to counteract this modernity, communities are constructed that can then be addressed with different governmental actions.[127] As I have already shown, there is no univocal notion of who 'the Mandinka' are and auto-designations of dignitaries also ascribe manifold identity constructions which are equally grounded in local urban surroundings but also transnational connections.

The active concealment of any individual voices and the appropriation of culture within bigger goals of globalized heritage preservation guidelines, which posit the Kankurang rite as a unanimous and community-based rite throughout Senegal and Gambia, establishes yet again implicated and reproduced power imbalances throughout the UNESCO website. However, the *invisible superstructure* of the visible content surfaces multifaceted paradoxes regarding how national political agencies such as the DPC and NCAC perceived their own roles and how these portrayals are mirrored by the official imagery and framings of UNESCO ICH. In interviews, the national institutions and heritage preservationists first and foremost tried to assert the visualization's verity—as Bocoum mythically describes the making of the footage and pictures as somewhat credible and 'authentic,' and Ceesay expressed his disbelief in the disproportional visual representation of the two nation states online. This caters to the overall hypothesis that otherwise hidden contextual knowledge about these visualizations remains a constant point of reflection, to both

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national heritage preservationists and to the struggle to will of invisibility of these agencies.

Fig. 2: EUTF Kankurang festival by ITC[128]

A group of percussionists and two Zimba masks—and not a Kankurang—illustrate the European Commission's EUTF website, announcing the revitalization of the annual Kankurang Festival funded via the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) and International Trade Center (see figure 2).[129] EUTF describes its target to "preserve cultural heritage and boost tourism"[130] through the festival—a double-edged sword, when reflecting on the argument by the ACHS of the relational commodification of heritage wherein marketing measures for touristic purposes and their visualizations, including images and performances, will inevitably change the rites and the communities performing them.[131]

However, EUTF's effort to harmonically boost tourism and preserve heritage does not sustain the analysis of *invisible superstructure* based on the website, which reverberates with several notions of the debates on in_visibilities. Analyzing the website, I will add interview material and reports of the International Trade Center (ITC),[132] unraveling the maintenance of hegemonic power by the will to abide certain debates. The EUTF website on the Kankurang Festival revival through the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) is a subordinated webpage, which in general provides information about development funding by the European Commission that is appointed to migration management projects. Next to the logics of success-

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monitoring and thriving collaborations to tackle the development-migrant-nexus from a European perspective, the website also informs of "news and stories" about the prosperous implementations of measures to "address root-causes of irregular migration."[133] Numbers are framed as "results," to cater to the impression of palpable output of the European Commission's efforts to "improve, strengthen and create" opportunities *in* Africa. African countries addressed by the measures are either classified by nation state or regions, like "Sahel and Lake Chad."[134]

An embedded video on the subordinate webpage was released by YEP in 2018; it depicts the first Roots-Festival, presenting Kankurang performances and different stakeholders who state their objectives to end 'irregular migration' through the festival in Janjanbureh, Central-River-Region. In contrast with the visualizations from UNESCO's website, the YEP provides no context about the mystical side of the Kankurang, the initiatory rite, nor *how* the figure's advertisement helps boost tourism and cater to the community's economic benefits and simultaneous preservation of culture as part of its European development policy. Throughout the video, neither UNESCO nor the Kankurang Documentation Center (KDC) display established in 2016 are mentioned. Doing so could have elucidated the co-funding of other development programs, since UNESCO financially supported the KDC through the *Japan Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*.[135] Additionally, a bridge to the Tuyangsita site near the KDC was renewed in 2016 through funding by the World Bank's *Community Driven Development Program*, as the Gambian UNESCO documentation file illustrates.[136] Since tourism accounts for 20% of Gambia's GDP,[137] the video states that the festival falls into the most frequented touristic season in January and lasts for three to four days, offering performances, musical events, tourist guides, and art and handicraft markets. The General Manager of the Association of Small Scale Enterprises in Tourism (ASSET), Modou Secka, is featured in the video, demonstrating products from local entrepreneurs.[138] The video then shows sequences of performed Kankurang masquerades and drone footage of the Tuyangsita, the spacious sacred site, now densely filled with visitors sitting under temporary wooden pavilions.[139] One of my interviewees, a museum guide of the KDC named Moussa Foon, explained to me that the sacred site could not be accessed by the non-initiated during circumcision.[140]

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Since the festival takes place in January, it seems not to interfere with the ritual coherence or the place's secrecy.

Further into the video, Fatou M. Jallow, project coordinator of YEP, speaks to a mostly white crowd of middle-aged men and women about battling 'irregular migration' to the EU through economic endorsement of Gambian youth. Gambian youth remain a collective mass of the *invisible superstructure*, addressed by different measures in an elitist and hegemonic discourse through European development policy. In contrast to the silenced Gambian youth in the visual elements of the EUTF's Festival webpage, Gambian individuals play a groundbreaking role on other subordinate pages on the EUTF's website, which portray the 'success-stories' of return migrants, framed as 'home-comers,' who have faced hardship in Libya or Europe and now wish to establish their own businesses in their home country.[141] In conclusion, the YEP video on the Festival's aims gives none of the young profiteers of this program a voice; we hear only the political representatives.

Consequently, reflecting on the sociospatial and sociotemporal arrangements of the *invisible superstructure* of the visualizations and linked information, a shift in EU ideology towards geopolitics of the body can be detected. The *invisible superstructure* is now deeply intertwined with notions of transnational territory within bigger 'cultural' regions as a socio-territorial extension with no autonomously moving bodies beyond those territorial borders.[142] National borders within larger African regions, such as "Sahel," within which performers should also stay, are the fundamental logic adopted when interrogating the *invisible superstructure* in which these visualizations are embedded. Not that the logic of racism of 'the West and the rest' has shifted, but the European hegemony by which African Nations are subjugated as different, externalizable, and othered geographies has more than a bitter taste to it in light of the increasingly protectionist European Union since the so-called 'migrant crisis' of 2015. This 'crisis' led to massive funding in border controls such as Frontex in the Mediterranean and third states, which are part of the 'backway' route also used by Gambian migrants to the EU.[143] By dismantling this *invisible superstructure* of the EUTF's website, even African heritage now seems to be subjected to these logics of European development policy, where money spent also dictates interests of preventing 'irregular migration' from low-skilled migrants to Europe, especially since the Central River Region in Gambia is particularly affected

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by emigration to Europe. With a total sum of €13 million deployed in Gambia for YEP[144] via the ITC[145] (one beneficiary being the Kankurang Festival Committee), YEP's self-understanding is to "address […] the economic root causes of irregular migration by supporting youth employment and entrepreneurship."[146] The sociospatial arrangements of the EUTF's Gambian state is a fixed locale of repatriation and readmission from European countries. The EUTF's visualizations' sociotemporal arrangements correspondingly emphasize an understanding of linear, progressive time, to assert the measurable betterment of the investments made by the EU.

These visualizations radically oppose the spatiotemporal arrangements of the visualizations in the Kankurang Documentation Center, where Gambia is portrayed as a country of immigration for many West African countries and therefore somewhat permeable to other cultural customs and traditions.[147] In comparison, the adoption of nationalized heritage for the EUTF's purposes (when really it is transnational and heritage to one ethnic group only) merge to one image; the reproduction of a particular gaze on 'traditional societies,' an exclusionary, partially condescending view on supranational institutions (UNESCO) and lastly a view on the racialized body[148] itself, which is being collectivized and territorialized in their 'home country' or larger 'cultural regions.' As Achille Mbembé wrote, the 21st century draws heavily on the recalibration of 19th century fabrications of racial subjects and bodies, to control the bodies' mobility.[149] When major donors to the EUTF such as Italy, Spain, and Germany also compose the countries with the highest numbers of Gambian migrants or refugees within the EU,[150] but also voluntary and forced readmissions to Gambia,[151] the funding of cultural expression as means for preventing emigration casts a shadow over all other debates.

The EUTF's visualization, embedded within heritage debates on the rite's commodification, is an entity of its own right, paralleled to UNESCO frictions. This illustrates how the Kankurang Festival in Janjanbureh is now in feasible confrontation with the logic of the visual representations of the Kankurang Documentation Center (KDC). One of the reasons given by the two nation states for their application to protect the Kankurang as Intangible Cultural Heritage was their desire to end the imminent threat posed by the rite's folklorization, particularly in tourist-oriented performances of the figure.[152] This objective seems to have taken a back seat to Gambia's concurrent desire for development aid from Europe.[153] Also, the Gambian

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National Center for Arts and Culture (NCAC) is not only responsible for the protection of the rite, its musealization in Banjul and Janjanbureh, but also the co-implementation with YEP and ITC of the annual Kankurang Festival.[154] The institution now has to tackle several tasks, which seem to fall at opposite extremes: on the one hand protecting the cultural heritage by ensuring the Mandinka elders' autonomy and authority over their heritage and course of musealization, and on the other vigorously promoting this heritage internationally.[155]

In short, the EUTF's website is neither about heritage nor about the Kankurang, but displays the financiers' views on the festival, objectives that lie somewhat outside the debates on cultural identity, authenticity, commodification, or critical self-reflection of development policy.[156] At the same time, deliberate deception about this heritage's debates cannot be committed, nor seem information be *deliberately hidden*. *Hidden* information would be in line with active concealment, which struggles with to reinstate hegemonic power. But this presentation of elements, such as the homepage of the website not even showing a Kankurang, reads, rather, as a sloppy illustration of the event. Whereas UNESCO ascribed a silenced mass of Gambian youth as an ethnic collective addressable by national measures of heritage policies, the EUTF doesn't depict them at all, but instead caters to a much darker image of anonymized masses wanting to come to Europe. The revival of the Kankurang rite is lastly framed overall as a success story, especially of home-comers to Gambia. This actually brings forth another type of struggle of the *invisible superstructure*—the *unintentionally inaccurate*, the inaccuracy of which lies in the convenient brace of *authorized order*.

6_Two Types of Invisible Superstructure or the Will to Invisibility

The delineated debates on the Kankurang's increasing visibility over the past decades allowed me to critically inquire into the visualizations of two recent online case studies of the Kankurang; addressing (1) the progressively visible heritagization as a debate on multi-contested authorized or hegemonic order on multiple scales, (2) the contested notions of visual commodification of heritage as non-conflictual and mutual entanglements, and (3) the unethical role often taken by western researchers in rendering this heritage visible, which will be discussed in this final subsection.

To aim for the multifaceted ambiguities of the agencies' different intentions to keep the reproduction of power maintained by the will to invisibility, this analysis

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specifically accentuates contested notions of time and space of the *invisible superstructure*. In the case of the UNESCO website, comparison of the two national agencies DPC and NCAC not only showed how they differently synthesized space and time, but how these also opposed each other. Through these contested spatiotemporal heritage constructions, UNESCO's understanding of the Kankurang as a local rural heritage with a cyclic understanding of time, was bound to national hegemony but subverted by the ambiguities produced by the visualizations themselves.

For the *invisible superstructure* designated after the EUTF webpage, their understanding of the Kankurang was deduced as a colonial legacy of multiple national border regimes attributable to bigger regions of global inequalities. With a certain linear understanding of time, the website made no allusion to the initiatory rite but to measurable time of betterment through funding.

In the case of UNESCO, *actively hidden* information disclosed the agency's intention to fit the rite into their own generally beautified and standardized imagery of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This case study also laid out the paradox of authenticity when contextual knowledge was taken into consideration. The authorized order of the two member states, Senegal and Gambia, and their heritage-preserving agencies, DPC and NCAC, were subverted by voices of different Mandinka dignitaries from both countries, as both institutions struggled to rationalize the paradoxes on how to make a heritage visible that should have been left invisible.

In a postcolonial state, which has been affected by assimilation policies from the direct French colonial rule, the struggle of the national institution DPC giving meaning to the visualizations showed how easily the website's visualizations were subverted by strong local narratives, which ground their authority in a longstanding oral literature of resilience against the state. In the postcolonial state of Gambia, which outlived indirect British colonial rule, the governmental body's framing of the Kankurang as a resource of nationhood was never really subjected to confrontation between different hegemonic regimes.

The visualizations of EUTF, however, change that. And although the EUTF website equally features notions of the nation state, it also reverberates with an understanding of sociospatial constructions wherein the Gambian state serves as a part of larger sociocultural regions, within the borders of which citizens should dwell

and stay. This showcased a new quality of power-imbalance, wherein the Kankurang was over-commodified in the name of European hegemony. This *unintentionally inaccurate* depiction of the Kankurang rite opened up the floor to these power imbalances, like the agency's self-understanding, which does not need to struggle or re-establish authorized order through accurate depiction, nor to deal sensitively with debates on authenticity and commodification, thanks to its overarching and ensured authority over the visualization's interpretation.

How could the theorization of the *invisible superstructure*—the *actively hidden* and the *unintentionally inaccurate*—serve to explain political implications of globally accessible institutional visualizations? The *actively hidden* demonstrates how active concealment could ground the intention to *regain* authorized order, where national institutions currently struggle with their sovereignty of interpreting the visualizations. On the other hand, the *unintentionally inaccurate* indicates hegemonic order over the nation state in a (new) powerful quality. This allows a rather revealing take on the different powerful agencies DPC, NCAC, and UNESCO, as well as ITC, YEP and EUTF in the field of their visual practices.

As I have shown, the *invisible superstructure*—even in a globalized and digitized media age—resonates with (inter)national politics, as well as with local regimes of domination, property, and their reproduction. At the same time, the production of visible data with its *invisible superstructure* might also just subvert visual regime's authorized order if we engage in a multi-modal reading of visualizations and surface discourses on and with these images.

The conceptualization of *invisible superstructure*, based on a phenomenological and a Marxist relational space theory approach, allows for a reshaping of the term in_visibility. This elucidated its methodological potential of building on the base of the material productions of supranational institutions, political structures, and the state, and interrogating the intentionalities and struggles of these agencies to maintain their power. Both the option to include contextual knowledge about the Kankurang and the subsequent deconstruction of spatiotemporal arrangements opened up the possibility of surfacing the weak or strong bases of power in relation to the other agencies.

Finally, the researcher's own intentions were discussed. The urge to *see* things is still understood as a certain process of meaning-making by Western scholars, of

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which I am part. More attention should therefore be paid to aspects of online visual content and their contexts, or to why some things should remain unseen, and whose intentions might be revealed by this in_visibility. Empirically, this was also shown by what pictures are globally visible. These are available through Senegal's orchestrated camera team that uniquely travelled to Casamance to take pictures for the application, and the incorporation of de Jong's photography by the UNESCO Multimedia service, omitting contextual knowledge about the intertextuality of his article. These are also available through the UNESCO website. The Gambian KDC, however is largely equipped with current photographs by Jason Florio, an award-winning photographer who frequently travels in Gambia, rather than with archival photographs of the Gambian National Archives.[157] Last, images are available through the Kankurang Festival's video and drone footage, which were conducted by YEP staff. A sensitive stance towards this visualized heritage can be attained through two rationales: first, by highlighting the particular epistemic framings and limitations to (online) field access of researchers, visual source material, and deductions within a Northern theorist positionality; second, by trying to include the contestations of 'the portrayed' to problematize the reproduction of imagery from powerful institutions. Those difficulties of the researcher's positionality can be encountered by critically engaging with Critical Heritage Theory, such as the AHD and in particular by making various local voices heard.

_Endnotes

1 Texts do not emerge from the invisible but are the result of joint reflections and collegial advice. Therefore, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to both Katharina Wolf and Jana Tiborra as well as the editorial team of *On_Culture* for their patient and appreciative yet very tangible suggestions, rendering this article visible.

2 See Arnold van Gennep et al., *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001 [1961]); see also Ferdinand de Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International African Institute, 2007), 18.

3 See UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale. Sénégal—Gambie. Le Kankurang. Troisième Proclamation des Chefs-D'œuvre du Patrimoine Oral et Immatériel de l'humanité* (2003), 13. (This is the institutional file of application by Senegal and Gambia to the UNESCO. It can only be obtained by contacting the respective authors, namely the Senegalese Direction du Patrimoine Culturel or the Gambian National Center for Arts and Culture. It is not an openly accessible or archived report.)

4 See UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 9.

5 See UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 9.

6 The term 'mask' is perceived as pejorative by many Mandinka elders, who view the Kankurang as a protective spirit, rather than a masquerade. Interview with Abdoulayé Sidibé in Ziguinchor, 2017. I will use the term 'figure' to differentiate between the rite and the symbolic figure.

7 See UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*.

8 See Valdimar Hafstein, "Intangible Heritage as a List: From Masterpieces to Representation," in *Intangible Heritage*, eds. Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (London: Routledge, 2009), 93–111, here: 108; see also Valdimar Hafstein, "Claiming Culture: Intangible Heritage Inc., Folklore, Traditional Knowledge," in *Prädikat „Heritage": Wertschöpfungen aus kulturellen Ressourcen*, Vol. 1, eds. Dorothee Hemme, Markus Tauschek, and Regina Bendix (Berlin: Lit, 2007), 75–100, here: 81; see also Stefan Willer, "Kulturelles Erbe: Tradieren und Konservieren," in *Erbe: Übertragungskonzepte zwischen Natur und Kultur*, eds. Stefan Willer, Sigrid Weigel, and Bernhard Jussen (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013), 160–201, here: 185.

9 See Ferdinand de Jong, "Le secret exposé: Révélation et reconnaissance d'un patrimoine immatériel au Sénégal," *gradhiva* 18 (2013): 98–123, here: 101.

10 I paraphrase Ferdinand de Jong's quote from Elisabeth Tonkin, "Cunning Mysteries," in *West African Masks and Cultural Systems*, ed. Sidney Kasfir (Tervuren: Musee Royal de L'Afrique Centrale, 1988), 241–252: here: 246, when asking "[w]ho has the right to present a mask and to turn others into an audience?" in regard to the secrecy of the masked performance of the Kumpo in Senegal, see also de Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity*, 160.

11 See Derek R. Petersen, "Introduction: Heritage Management in Colonial and Contemporary Africa," in *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories and Infrastructures*, eds. Derek R. Peterson, Kodzo Gavua, and Ciraj Rassool, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–36, here: 1.

12 Noriko Aikawa-Faure, "Safeguarding of the African Intangible Cultural Heritage," in *Preserving the Cultural Heritage in Africa: Crisis or Renaissance?*, eds. Kenji Yoshida and John Mack (Woodbridge: Unisa Press, 2008), 96–103, here: 96.

13 See Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2010), 48.

14 See Hafstein, "Intangible Heritage as a List," 108; see also Hafstein, "Claiming Culture," 81; see also Willer, "Kulturelles Erbe," 185.

15 See UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 27.

16 Concepts of authenticity and authentic cultural expressions are widely challenged, since there is no common global feature of culture or categorical claims such as the duration, historicity, continuous performance, or form of ritual elements nor the consistency of the group involved. Ideally the example of the 3000-year-old Ise Jingu Shrine in Japan is accentuated which is repetitiously demolished and rebuilt—and therefore does not manifest an expression of World Heritage for UNESCO but an intangible heritage since the material is repeatedly rearranged. See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production," *Museum International* 56, no. 12 (2004): 52–65, here: 59, and on authenticity of architectural heritage, see Tino Mager, Schillernde Unschärfe: Der Begriff der Authentizität im architektonischen Erbe (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016).

17 See Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production," 58; see also de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 100.

18 See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Reconfiguring Museums: An Afterword," in *Die Schau des Fremden: Ausstellungskonzepte zwischen Kunst, Kommerz und Wissenschaft*, ed. Cordula Grewe (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), 361–376, here: 365.

19 See Hafstein, "Intangible Heritage as a List," 108; see also Hafstein, "Claiming Culture," 81; see also Willer, "Kulturelles Erbe," 185.

20 Hafstein, "Claiming Culture," 81.

21 Most Western scholars shared this view on oral traditions as retrograde and deficient, since it served no 'objectivity' or scientific citability and the preservationist were viewed as incapable of knowledge reflection. See Victor Ahamefule Anoka, *African Philosophy: An Overview and a Critique of the Philosophical Significance of African Oral Literature* (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2012), 23.

22 See Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 2002), 98.

23 See Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 98.

24 Mamadou Diawara, Bernard Lategan, and Jörn Rüsen, "Introduction," in *Historical Memory in Africa: Dealing with the Past, Reaching for the Future in an Intercultural Context*, eds. Mamadou Diawara, Bernard Lategan, and Jörn Rüsen (New York: Berghan Books, 2010), 1–12, here: 2.

25 Elisio Macamo, "Social Theory and Making Sense of Africa," in *Historical Memory in Africa: Dealing with the Past, Reaching for the Future in an Intercultural Context*, eds. Mamadou Diawara, Bernard Lategan, and Jörn Rüsen (New York: Berghan Books, 2010), 13–26, here: 15; see also Raewyn Connell, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 3–26.

26 See Victor Ahamefule Anoka, *African Philosophy: An Overview and a Critique of the Philosophical Significance of African Oral Literature* (Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2012), 35.

27 Elisio Macamo, "Social Theory and Making Sense of Africa," 25.

28 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 3.

29 Hafstein, "Claiming Culture," 80.

30 UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 18 [transl. C.B.].

31 Since 2008 the Kankurang has been inscribed as Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO by Senegal and Gambia, after being proclaimed a UNESCO Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity since 2005, see UNESCO-Intangible Cultural Heritage Section, "Kankurang Initiatory Rite," accessed January 14, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kankurang-manding-initiatory-rite-00143>.

32 However, none of these informants are Mandinka elders from Gambia, see UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 10.

33 UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 6 and 14; see also de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 112.

34 See UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 14, 26. On the re-shaping on societal structures by colonialism and cultural memory of the Mande-World, see also Mamadou Diawara, "Geschichtsbewußtsein im Alltag: Die Beschwörung der Vergangenheit in der heutigen Mande-Welt," in *Identitäten: Erinnerung, Geschichte, Identität*, eds. Aleida Assmann and Heidrun Friese (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1998), 314–345, here: 316.

35 De Jong questioned this merely prestigious description and longue durée of the Kankurang of the UNESCO file. See de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 112–113.

36 See UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 7.

[37] See William Gray and Surgeon Dochard, *Travels in Western Africa: In the Years 1818, 19, 20, and 21, from the River Gambia through Woolli, Bondoo, Galam, Kasson, Kaarta, and Foolidoo, to the River Niger* (London: John Murray, 1825); see also British Library Board (General Reference Collection 1047.h.8. Plate opposite p056); For Kankurang type descriptions, see also National Center for Arts and Culture, Brochure of the Kankurang Documentation Centre in Janjanbureh, Kankurang and other masking traditions of the Gambia (Banjul: NCAC, 2016).

[38] See Francis Moore, Bartholomew Stibbs, and Leo Africanus, *Travels into the inland parts of Africa: containing a description of the several nations for the space of six hundred miles up the River Gambia; their trade, habits, customs, language, manners, religion and government; the power, disposition and characters of some negro princes; with a particular account of Job Ben Solomon*. To which is added, Capt. Stibbs's voyage up the Gambia in the year 1723, to make discoveries; with an accurate map of that river taken on the spot: and many other copper plates. Also extracts from the Nubian's geography, Leo the African, and other authors ancient and modern, concerning the Niger, Nile, or Gambia, and observations thereon (London: E. Cave, 1744), 40, 116–117.

[39] See de Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity*, 82–83.

[40] See Claudia Ba, *Ikonische Kohärenz: Vom Erben des Kankurang in Senegal und Gambia* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2021), 171; for oral traditions on the matter collected by de Jong in the 1990s in Ziguinchor, see also de Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity*, 113.

[41] See de Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity*, 65.

[42] See Ba, *Ikonische Kohärenz*, 29; see also Wiktor Stoczkowski, "UNESCO's Doctrine of Human Diversity: A Secular Soteriology?," *Anthropology Today* 25, no. 3 (2009): 7–11.

[43] De Jong researched the Kankurang between 1990 and 2005, see de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 11; see also, Peter M. Weil, "The Masked Figure and Social Control: The Mandinka Case," *Africa* 41, no. 4 (1971): 279–293, here: 284.

[44] See de Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity*, 14, 37.

[45] On the anecdote of the Mystery of the Ifambundi-Kankurang see National Center for Arts and Culture, Brochure of the Kankurang Documentation Centre in Janjanbureh, Kankurang and other masking traditions of the Gambia (Banjul: NCAC, 2016), 16–17.

[46] See de Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity*, 47.

[47] See Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg, *Ein Afrikaner in Paris: Léopold Sédar Senghor und die Zukunft der Moderne* (München: C.H. Beck, 2018), 43.

[48] De Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity*, 98.

[49] See de Jong, Masquerades of Modernity, 47.

[50] A brief collection of local articles of recent years on the rite's violence, see also Agence du Presse sénégalaise, "Suspension pendant un an du Kankourang à Ziguinchor," in *Au Sénégal*, June 04, 2015, <https://www.au-senegal.com/suspension-pendant-un-an-du-kankourang-a-ziguinchor,11190.html>; "Affaire du kankourang qui a fait un mort deux arrestations!," in *Bonjour Dakar*, September 20, 2017, <https://www.bonjourdakar.com/affaire-kankourang-a-mort-deux-arrestations/>; "Dieupeul: La police stoppe le Kankourang en plein spectacle," in *Bonjour Dakar*, Oktober 01, 2018, <https://www.bonjourdakar.com/dieupeul-police-stoppe-kankourang-plein-spectacle/>; "KOLDA: Le kankourang écope de 6 mois de prison ferme pour…," in *Bonjour Dakar*, <https://www.bonjourdakar.com/kolda-kankourang-ecope-de-6-mois-de-prison-ferme/>; for the event and media coverage on the violation and consequential death of a Mandinka community member in Marsassoum in 1987 see also de Jong, *Masquerades of*

Modernity, 133.

51 Interviews conducted in 2017 and 2018 with former Director of the Direction du Patrimoine Culturel (DPC) du Senegal, Hamady Bocoum, and current director, Abdoulayé Assiz-Guissé.

52 See Ba, *Ikonische Kohärenz*, 172. See also de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 109.

53 See de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 117.

54 On the difficulties of description of tribe and ethnic groups, see Aidan W. Southall, "The Illusion of Tribe," in *Perspectives on Africa: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation*, ed. Roy R. Grinker (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 83–94, here: 91.

55 UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 7.

56 An explanation for the different ways of dealing with the visibility of the rite lie in the different societal composition, since Mandinka represent the largest Gambian ethnic group with 33% (CIA, "Gambia, the—the World Factbook," accessed January 05, 2022, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/gambia-the/>), while they make up only 5,6% of the Senegalese population (See, CIA, "Senegal, the—the World Factbook," accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/senegal/#people-and-society>), which regularly causes unwanted clashes with the figure, specifically in densely populated multi-ethnic urban areas (Interview with Hamady Bocoum, 2017, in Dakar, former director of the Direction du Patrimoine Culturel du Senegal, Interview with Abdoulayé Assiz-Guisé, 2018, in Dakar, current director of the Direction du Patrimoine Culturel du Senegal).

57 See Hamet Ba, *La patrimonialisation des archives télévisuelles africaines dans le contexte de la mondialisation de l'information documentaire audiovisuelle: usage, contexte: le cas des archives de la télévision nationale sénégalaise* (Dakar: Université Charles de Gaulle—Lille III, 2016), 291.

58 Joar Skrede and Harris Hølleland show in their article on reviewing the Authorized Heritage Discourse that already briefly after its conceptualization by Laurajane Smith in Uses of Heritage it was no longer attributed as a process but nominally used as an entity, which would then obscure the processes that could have been critically reviewed by the concept. The authors state that this is partially due to the fact that the AHD stays within the epistemological confines of the tangible vs. intangible. See Joar Skrede and Herdis Hølleland, "Uses of Heritage and Beyond: Heritage Studies Viewed through the Lens of Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Realism," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 18, no. 1 (2018): 77–96, here: 91.

59 See Ferdinand de Jong, "A Masterpiece of Masquerading: Contradictions of Conservation in Intangible Heritage," in *Reclaiming Heritage: Alternative Imaginaries of Memory in West Africa*, eds. Ferdinand de Jong and Michael Rowlands (London: Taylor & Francis, 2016), 161–84, here: 161.

60 See Michel Batisse and Gérard Bolla, *The Invention of "World Heritage,"* (Paris: UNESCO History papers 2, 2005), 93.

61 See Hafstein, "Claiming Culture," 81.

62 See de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 117.

63 See Bala Saho, "Masking for Money: The Commodification of Kankurang and Simba Mask Performances in Urban Gambia," in *Wari Matters: Ethnographic Explorations of Money in Mande World*, ed. Stephen Wootton (Münster: Lit. Verlag, 2006), 162–177. For visual impressions, see Richard Joosten, "Kankurang in Gambia" *YouTube* (2018), accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PO5-KwwoPKg>.

64 See Roots Festival, "Kankurang in the Gambia," *YouTube* (2011), accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0raHYLLX6bw>.

65 See Mama's Gambia, "Dancing Kankurang," *YouTube* (2017), accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b_MjTW8cXr4>. See also Robyn Hygate, "Kankurang in The Gambia," *YouTube* (2013), accessed January 31, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1X99KTqdna0>.

66 Interview with Abdoulayé Sidibé, 2017, in Ziguinchor. See also de Jong, "Le Secret Exposé," 107. However, this had not always been the case, as de Jong cites Catholic priest Doutrémépuich, who described the Kankurang's touristic display in Ziguinchor in 1939, see de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 119. De Jong also names one example of a Kankurang Festival held in Sédhiou, the southern Casamance in Senegal, in 2004, which by then already marked a widespread date in Senegal's national cultural calendar, see de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 111.

67 See de Jong, "A Masterpiece of Masquerading," 181.

68 See de Jong, "A Masterpiece of Masquerading," 181.

69 De Jong, "Le Secret Exposé," 101.

70 See UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 18; see also, interview with Abdoulayé Sibibé, 2017, in Ziguinchor.

71 See Willer, "Kulturelles Erbe," 186.

72 Willer, "Kulturelles Erbe," 185 [transl. C.B.]

73 Especially musealization yields skepticism of locals in West Africa, as it is linked not only to colonial rule over masks and rites by "placing contentious or dangerous objects out of the public domain," see Derek Peterson, "Introduction: Heritage Management in Colonial and Contemporary Africa," in *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, and Infrastructures*, ed. Derek Peterson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1–36, here: 5, but also recalls the longstanding restrictive practices of accessibility to such institutions, see David E. Aradeon, "Museums in West Africa," in *Museums and Urban Culture in West Africa*, eds. Alexis Adande and Emmanuel N. Arinze (Oxford: Currey, 2002), 131–138, here: 134.

74 The exhibition consisted of six poster designs and a cabinet with several sacred objects. The room was made available in a private school, but was announced to be re-incorporated for the schools' own purposes. Interview with curator Sadibou Dabo, 2017 in Mbour and with Mandiaye Fall, heritage-entrepreneur in Mbour, in 2017 and 2019.

75 See interview with Mamadou Mané, 2018, in Dakar.

76 See interview with Abdoulayé Sibibé, 2017, in Ziguinchor.

77 See interview with Sadibou Dabo, 2017, in Mbour.

78 See interview with Abdoulayé Sidibé, 2017, in Ziguinchor.

79 See Ba, *Ikonische Kohärenz*, 300.

80 Lamin Saho, "Opinion: Rebranding the Roots Festival the Way Forward," in *The Point*, January 22, 2020, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/opinion-rebranding-the-roots-festival-the-way-forward>. See also Gambia Tourism Board, *2017 Official Country Guide* (Banjul: GTB, 2017), 60.

81 See Bala Saho, "Masking for Money," 162–177.

82 See Nina Baur, "Decolonizing Social Science Methodology: Positionality in the German-Language Debate," *Historical Social Research* 46, no. 2 (2021), 205–243, here: 206.

83 See Ba, *Ikonische Kohärenz*, 181, citing: UNESCO, *Dossier de Candidature Multinationale*, 14; see also Moore, Stibbs, and Africanus, *Travels into the inland parts of Africa*, 117; see also Mungo Park, *Les trois voyages de Mungo Park au Maroc et dans l'intérieur de l'afrique (1787–*

1804), Racontés par lui-même (Paris: BNF, 1882), 106; Gray and Dochard, *Travels in Western Africa*, 55–56; and Weil, "The Masked Figure and Social Control," 280.

84 See de Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity*, 107.

85 See de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 106.

86 See de Jong, "Le secret exposé," 107.

87 De Jong, *Masquerades of Modernity*, 134.

88 Although he was the former curator of the Espace Kankourang de Mbour, as a member of the Mandinka Community, Sadibou Dabo corrected me several times. See Interview with Sadibou Dabo, 2017, in Mbour.

89 Interview with Abdoulayé Sidibé, 2017, in Ziguinchor.

90 See Reiner Keller, "Die komplexe Diskursivität der Visualisierungen," in *Perspektiven wissenssoziologischer Diskursforschung*, eds. Sasa Bosancic and Reiner Keller (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016), 75–94, here: 77.

91 See Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 6.

92 Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 135.

93 Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 14.

94 For reasons of transparency, I want to mention that this theoretical approach is in conflict with the Foucaultian notion of 'discourse,' since "[Foucault] explicitly rejected the Marxist claim that meaning was determined by the system of production, for example; he was always vague about how discourses connected to other, non-discursive processes such as economic change; and while he acknowledged that power has aims and effects, he never explained these by turning to notions of human or institutional agency." Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials* (London: SAGE Publications, 2001), 139. So, I will have to neglect this particular non-engagement with economic change and institutional agency, such as UNESCO, because it marks the starting point of this analysis.

95 See Roswitha Breckner, "Bildwahrnehmung—Bildinterpretation," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 37, no. 2 (2012): 143–64, here: 145.

96 See Breckner, "Bildwahrnehmung—Bildinterpretation," 145.

97 See Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, 136.

98 See Walter D. Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7–8 (2009): 159–81, here: 162.

99 See Martina Löw, "The Constitution of Space," *European Journal of Social Theory* 11, no. 1 (2018): 25–49, here: 27. See also Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991 [1974]). See also Rob Shields, "Father of the Dialectic and Critique of Structuralism," in Lefebvre, *Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics*, ed. Rob Shields (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2005), 109–126, here: 115. See also Christian Schmid, "Henri Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space: Towards a Three-dimensional Dialectic," in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, ed. Kanishka Goonewardena (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), 27–45, here: 27, 36.

100 See Nicki Lisa Cole, "Definition of Base and Superstructure," in *ThoughtCo*, August 28, 2020, <thoughtco.com/definition-of-base-and-superstructure-3026372>.

101 See Cole, "Definition of Base and Superstructure," in *ThoughtCo*, August 28, 2020, <thoughtco.com/definition-of-base-and-superstructure-3026372>.

[102] Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible: Followed by Working Notes* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 257.

[103] See Merleau-Ponty and Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 257. See also Alphonso Lingis, "Translator's Preface," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, eds. Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lefort (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), xl–lvi, here: li.

[104] See Lingis, "Translator's Preface," li.

[105] Jörg Paulus, "The Modes of Existence of the Gap in Archival Records," in *Collecting Loss*, eds. Simone Bogner, Gabriele Dolff-Bonekämper and Hans-Rudolf Meier (Weimar: Bauhaus-Universitätsverlag Weimar, 2021), 16–35, here: 16.

[106] See Paulus, "The Modes of Existence of the Gap in Archival Records," 18.

[107] But to deal with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach bears problems to the practicability of empirical research. The difficulty to deal with Merleau-Ponty's reflections of visibility and invisibility lies within his ostensibly philosophical approach. "Already the phenomenology of perception could be elaborated only across the conflict of intellectualism and empiricism," Lingis, "Translator's Preface," xlvi.

[108] Aleida Assmann, "Das Geheimnis und die Archäeologie der literarischen Kommunikation: Einführende Bemerkungen," in *Schleier und Schwelle: Geheimnis und Öffentlichkeit*, eds. Aleida Assmann et al. (München: Fink, 1997), 7–16, here: 11.

[109] Merleau-Ponty's process of becoming aware of 'a thing' has no subject, no place, no origin, see Merleau-Ponty and Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 257. Rather this process constitutes space and time itself, he writes: "The sensible thing is not in space, but, like a direction, is at work across space, presides over a system of oppositional relationships. It is not inserted in a pre-existing locus of space; it organizes a space of planes and fields about itself. Likewise, its presence presents a certain contracted trajectory of time," Lingis, "Translator's Preface," xlviii.

[110] See Martina Löw, "The Constitution of Space," 35.

[111] Also, whereas the separation of subject and object in phenomenological research might be applicable within Northern theory, it might also show limitations when dealing with non-Western cultures. Lefebvre illustrates the limitations of dialectics on Japanese sign-language systems, because as pictograms they are simultaneously language and image. See Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 152.

[112] See Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom," 162. See Connell, *Southern Theory*, 44.

[113] See Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 5.

[114] Accessed January 31, 2022, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kankurang-manding-initiatory-rite-00143>

[115] Interview Hamady Bocoum, 2017, in Dakar.

[116] A Betacam SP usage had been advised for the inscription in the list as Masterpieces. See UNESCO, *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity: Guide for the Presentation of Candidature Files* (Paris: UNESCO Press, 2001), 9, accessed February 5, 2022, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/Proclamation_guide-2000_version-EN.pdf>.

[117] See Interview with Coulaty Kabo, 2017, in Ziguinchor.

[118] In fact, on one of my first days during fieldwork in Dakar in 2017, I went to a copy shop to do some printouts of the UNESCO website, which I would then take as a stimulus to interviews with me. One of the shops employees, who was born in Casamance, not only identified the city of

Ziguinchor, where the pictures were taken, but also some of the percussionists and musicians and was able to tell me their family names.

119 Interview with Abdoulayé Sidibé, 2017, in Ziguinchor.

120 See UNESCO-Intangible Cultural Heritage Section, "Kankurang Initiatory Rite," accessed January 14, 2021, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kankurang-manding-initiatory-rite-00143>.

121 The Kankurang was first proclaimed Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. This program was a trial, and all 90 originally proclaimed cultural expressions where afterwards transcribed into the lists of the 2003 Convention of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Subsequently the nomination process of the candidature file and provided video footage and photography of the Kankurang date back to the process of the application as a Masterpiece. What had been demanded of the member states can be read in detail in UNESCO's guideline. See UNESCO, *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/Proclamation_guide-2000_version-EN.pdf>.

122 See Interview with Hassoum Ceesay, director of the NCAC, 2017, in Banjul. On the Research Documentation Division (RDD) of the National Center for Arts and Culture in Fajara see also Hassoum Ceesay, "Doing Archival Research in the Gambia: Locating and Appraising the Sources," Esboços 25, no. 39 (2018): 49–67, here: 55. See also Universität Hamburg, "NCAC National Digital Archive of The Gambia," *NCAC National Digital Archive of The Gambia* (blog), accessed July 09, 2022, <https://ncac-national-digital-archive.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/>.

123 De Jong, "Le secret exposé," 103.

124 See the original length of 11-minute footage of the application video by the member states: UNESCO—Multimedia Archives eServices (2007–2018), "Le Kankurang rite d'initiation mandingue," accessed February 5, 2022, <https://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/?pg=33&s=films_details&id=625>.

125 See Willer, "Kulturelles Erbe," 186.

126 See Hafstein, "Claiming Culture," 81.

127 See Hafstein, "Claiming Culture," 81.

128 Accessed February 6, 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/all-news-and-stories/yep-and-revival-janjanbureh-kankurang-festival_en>

129 The YEP's website reproduces exactly the same text as the EU-Commissions' website, so this analysis can be neglected. See also, National Center for Arts and Culture, "About Us," accessed January 31, 2022, <https://ncac.gm/>.

130 European Commission, "EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa: YEP and the Revival of the Kankurang Festival," accessed January 2, 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/all-news-and-stories/yep-and-revival-janjanbureh-kankurang-festival_en>.

131 See Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production," 81.

132 The EUTF only contributes development aid via the ITC, which is therefore also charged with reports. See Gibril Faal, "Civil Society and Input to EU-Africa Cooperation on Migration: The Case of the Gambia" ECRE Working Papers 12, unpublished manuscript, last modified January 9, 2022, <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Working-Paper-12-The-Gambia.pdf>, P4.

133 European Commission, "EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa," accessed June 15, 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index_en>.

134 European Commission, "EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa," accessed June 15, 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index_en>.

135 See UNESCO Doc 00250, "UNESCO / Japan Funds-in-Trust for the Preservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: Action Plan for the Safeguarding of the Kankurang, Manding Initiatory Rite," (n.p: 2009).

136 See National Center for Arts and Culture, "New Developments," in the *NCAC-UNESCO Documentation File of The Gambia,* F. 263, 8. See also, Simon H. Heß, Dany Jaimovich, Matthias Schündeln, "Development Projects and Economic Networks: Lessons from Rural Gambia," *The Review of Economic Studies* 88, no. 3 (2021): 1347–1384, here: 1347.

137 Pre-COVID-19, the country depended mostly on European tourists. See International Trade Administration, "Gambia, the—Travel and Tourism," accessed January 5, 2022, <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/gambia-travel-and-tourism>. See also, Franziska Zanker and Judith Altrogge, "The Politics of Migration Gouvernance in the Gambia" (Freiburg: Arnold Bergstraesser Institute for Cultural Studies Research e.V., 2017), 8.

138 Gambia YEP—Youth Empowerment Project Gambia on YouTube, "YEP—Kankurang Festival," *YouTube*, accessed February 06, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HKHpqv16-U>.

139 Following these establishing shots, Adama Bah from the Gambian Tourism Board explains all different kinds of masquerades on display during the festival (but he does not mention the Kankurang). Sulayman Barry, governor of the Central River Region at that time, is then filmed while holding a speech on how culture is a driving force for livelihood and community strength. See Gambia YEP.

140 See Interview with Moussa Foon, 2017, in Janjanbureh.

141 See European Commission, "EU Emergency Trust Fund: News and Stories," accessed February 2, 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/all-news-and-stories_en>.

142 See Anja Weiß, Soziologie Globaler Ungleichheiten (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017), 314.

143 See Franziska Zanker and Judith Altrogge, *The Politics of Migration Gouvernance in the Gambia* (Freiburg: Arnold Bergstraesser Institute for Cultural Studies Research e.V., 2017), 4.

144 See International Trade Center, "EU and ITC Launch Job, Entrepreneurship Initiative for the Youth in the Gambia," accessed December 21, 2021, <https://www.intracen.org/news/Africa-EU-and-ITC-launch-job-entrepreneurship-initiative-for-youth-in-the-Gambia/>.

145 Amidst the financial instabilities under the former dictator, the EUTF stopped direct financial aid and supports programs financially only through the ITC. See Gibril Faal, "Civil Society and Input to EU-Africa Cooperation on Migration: The Case of the Gambia, P4" ECRE Working Papers 12. Unpublished manuscript, last modified January 9, 2022, accessed January 12, 2022, <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Working-Paper-12-The-Gambia.pdf>. The YEP campaign has been deemed very successful: "Using a compelling media strategy, the project has gained high visibility for their wide spectrum of activities and broad network of cooperation partners and is generally well received amongst its beneficiaries." Francisca Zanker and Judith Altrogge, "The Political Economy of Migration Governance in the Gambia," (Freiburg: Arnold Bergstraesser Institute for Cultural Studies Research e.V., 2019), 20. Nevertheless, YEP also misses its own goals through different factors, such as age limitations (15–35) of participants, or by focusing on limited productions or negligible economic sectors. See Zanker and Altrogge, "The Political Economy of Migration Governance in the Gambia."

146 Youth Empowerment Project, "Latest from YEP!," accessed December 21, 2021, <https://yep.gm/>; see also on how the EUTF Fund was established after the 2015 Valletta

Summit, European Council, "Valletta Summit on Migration. 11–12 November 2015. Action Plan and Political Declaration, Page 4," accessed January 3, 2022, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/11/12/valletta-final-docs/> and donations of over €5 billion were transferred, the Sahel region being the greatest beneficiary; see European Commission, "EU Emergency Trust Fund. Homepage," accessed January 2, 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/index_en>. The Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP) is only one out of many summits and Marshall plans, all addressing 'irregular migration' from Africa to the EU; see Simone Schlindwein, "Irgendwo in Afrika: Konsequenzen der Auslagerung der EU-Grenzen," in Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung bpb, accessed July 23, 2019, <https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/kurzdossiers/283720/konsequenzen-der-auslagerung-der-eu-grenzen>.

147 See Ba, *Ikonische Kohärenz*, 275.

148 See Joseph-Achille Mbembé, *Kritik der schwarzen Vernunft* (Bonn: bpb, 2016), 48.

149 See Mbembé, *Kritik der schwarzen Vernunft*, 48.

150 See Republic of The Gambia, The Gambia National Development Plan (NDP 2018-21) (Banjul, 2018), 238.

151 The Gambian Government estimates that 140,000 Gambians live abroad, with more than 14,000 migrants in Germany. But they name a higher figure, about 200,000 Gambians, when looking at the larger diaspora and taking the 2nd generation into account. Overseas remittances make up 20% of the country's GDP. See International Organization for Migration, "The Gambia," accessed December 08, 2021, <https://gambia.iom.int/>. Simultaneously, in 2016, Gambians composed the highest number of all nationalities to arrive in Italy via the Mediterranean. Gibril Faal, "Civil Society and Input to EU-Africa Cooperation on Migration: The Case of the Gambia, P3," ECRE Working Papers 12. Unpublished manuscript, last modified January 09, 2022, accessed January 12, 2022, <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Working-Paper-12-The-Gambia.pdf>. The end of the dictatorship of Yahya Jammeh and the democratic transition to newly elected president Adama Barrow in 2017 seemed to mark a changing point in the tensed relationship with the EU. However, it made no halt to Gambian return migration—which was now classified as a safe return country by the EU—making thousands of asylum-seekers instantly vulnerable to deportation. Germany became one of the biggest donors of EU member states to reintegration and repatriation programs, even donating to third party countries. See Gibril Faal, "Civil Society." But readmission and mass deportation are not welcomed, even by the new Gambian government, and the relations tense up again. Recently the repatriation of 2000 expired asylum appeals from Germany have been denied by the Gambian state and the consequences are deemed severely for future visa admissions. See Mimi Mefo Takambou, "EU escalates Row with Gambia over Expelled Migrants," in *Deutsche Welle*, accessed January 4, 2022, <https://www.dw.com/en/eu-escalates-row-with-gambia-over-expelled-migrants/a-59072367>. Meanwhile the European Union deploys Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency, EBCG) in the Mediterranean but also in Niger. Germany alone invested €1 billion in the Nigerien army to secure national borders which are crossed by one of the most popular migrant's routes from Sahel. See Schlindwein, "Irgendwo in Afrika." However, Frontex has been accused of risky, life-threatening and illegal pushbacks. See Florian Kellermann, Paul Vorreiter and Verena Schälter, "EU-Grenzsicherung und Menschenrechte / Frontex und die Pushback-Vorwürfe," in *Deutschlandfunk*, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/eu-grenzsicherung-und-menschenrechte-frontex-und-die-100.html>, which were made visible by independent private refugee boats and threatened migrants and refugees themselves through mobile phone footage.

152 See UNESCO, *Dossier De Candidature Multinationale*, 18.

153 See European Commission, "EU Emergency Trust Fund."

154 See National Center for Arts and Culture, "About Us," accessed January 31, 2022, <https://ncac.gm/>.

155 The Kankurang Festival has also been attributed to the well-visited 'Roots-Festival,' initiated by the Ministry of Tourism and held every two years in The Gambia, which attracts tourists from the diaspora in search of their heritage. See Saho, "Opinion. Rebranding the Roots Festival the way forward," accessed January 31, 2022, <https://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/opinion-rebranding-the-roots-festival-the-way-forward>.

156 On the discursive power and the problematization of 'excluding partners' in development aid, see Maria Eriksson Baaz, *The Paternalism of Partnership: A Postcolonial Reading of Identity in Development Aid* (London: Zed Books, 2016), 19.

157 See Jason Florio, "About &CV," accessed June 15, 2022, <https://www.floriophoto.com/ABOUT-/1/caption>.