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Global Memory Agents

The memory of Danish slavery and colonialism never took up more than a marginal place in Danish national historiography and historical consciousness - a fact that has made some claim that it might even have been deliberately forgotten. Recently, however, following a riot in the US Virgins Islands in 1998 during the celebration ceremony of the 150th anniversary of the abolishment of slavery at the islands (at that time the Danish West Indies), and after continued efforts from The African Caribbean Reparations and Resettlement Association (ACRRA) - a social movement in the territory seeking both reparations from Denmark and independence from the US - a newborn awareness of colonialism in general and slavery in particular has gained new strength even in Denmark. Although these efforts haven't so far resulted in an official public statement on Danish slavery and slave trade, a change is still visible in the increased number of tv documentaries, movies, museum exhibitions, public talks and even children's programmes dealing with the colonial heritage and Danish engagement in the transatlantic slavery.

As Levy & Sznajder assert in *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* the Holocaust might have opened up for a new understanding of older/other atrocities in line with the Holocaust and the new attitudes towards older historical injustices such as slavery and colonialism are partly explained by inspiration from ways in which Holocaust has been treated since the 1960s. But at the same time the Holocaust as the golden standard and the German model for coming to terms with the past do not unambiguously mean that older historical injustices are now treated likewise. Although a number of statements of regret for slavery and atrocities committed during colonialism have been issued since 1998, the failure at Durban I in 2001 and the unsuccessful slavery and Jim Crow trials in the US point to the fact that the means to both repair and remember older historical injustices seems to be different.

As I will show in my paper this leaves the Danish case in the intersection of wishes to remember the Danish slavery propelled forward by a new kind of global memory agents such as ACRRA, gaining impact on a Danish historical consciousness, which was formerly generated within the confines of the nation; but also supported by Danish citizens influenced by a larger global tendency to acknowledge and atone the darker parts of the nation's past in line with the larger question of reparations, official apologies and other kinds of amends for historical justices that have been described by amongst others Jeffrey K. Olick (*The Politics of Regret* 2007), Elazar Barkan (*The Guilt of Nations* 2000) & John Torpey (*Making Whole What has been Smashed* 2006); and finally the Danish state still resisting to take an official stance on the issue.

With this situation as a starting point I will argue that a new definition of “reparations” is emerging from the negotiations between these different actors defining reparations much broader as also including memory creating activities.