



AFRICA IN MOVIMENTO / AFRICA ON THE MOVE

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TITLE: THINKING THE FORBIDDEN ARCHIVE

AUTHOR: SARA DEHKORDI, UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE AND FREIE UNIVERSITY BERLIN
(sara.m.dehkordi@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT: As in many other texts that evolve from an open decolonial perspective, obviously, questions of methodology, language and the power to knowledge production are not only central to this paper, but they function as a permanent critical voice that challenges, that seeks reflection and re-reflection, and that shatters normalized and dominant epistemologies that were/are complicit in the construction and reproduction of colonial/neo-colonial discourse. This perspective evolved out of the necessity to rethink orders of knowledge that were manufactured by the colonial regimes in order to maintain political, economical and cultural hegemony. Coloniality, then, is a power structure that accumulated and settled in the different layers and institutions of society, beginning with its most influential wing in relation to knowledge production, the academy. Thought further, not a single discipline could have been spared, on the contrary, some branches of the humanities and the natural sciences assumed an essential role as actual artisans of colonial discourse. Dependent of and engendered by each other, coloniality and colonial discourse must be seen as the very condition of what is their joint product, the colonial archive. In other words, coloniality is the articulation of the very colonial condition of the archive, its discursive place and apportionment of function. In this regard, one part of our focus here must lie on the role coloniality plays in the formation of the present-day archive, on the determining of its limits, on its filters, in short and with Jacques Derrida's words, on its *arkheions*. The other part should look for its dialectic relationship to society, and the space that single people or social groups try to create, against memorialization and historization processes that dominant discourses generate. Therefore, this paper will give an introduction to two examples of the South African context, of what Sonia Combe discusses as the *forbidden archive*. To this effect, it will argue that in the face of present-day forced evictions of low-income residents in South Africa, and the justification and rationalization models that are drawn from the colonial archive, small counter-archives are being built by the people affected, for their stories not being swallowed by systematic processes of criminalization and marginalization. The paper will look at how, in order to achieve omnipresence, the colonial archive works to create absence. Absence as the antonym of memory is one of the key concepts inside the construct of the archive. What is absent stands in direct contradiction with what is present. As they are detangled with power relations that in the first instance had introduced them, archival documents, in order to exist, repress their counterparts, their intrinsic paradoxes. Thereby, to entangle the power relations behind them, this facet of them must be illuminated, because, if looked at from this angle, each of them, in order to gain voice, must at the same time silence. It is precisely this absence, respectively, the absent document, that evokes gaps in memory and remembrance, and historical blackouts in the worst case. We can gather here from, that in order to be able to create dominant discourse, the colonial and respectively, the *repressive archive*, darkens, erases and replaces. Hereunto, this paper will draw the attention of its readers and discussants.

AUTHOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

SARA DEHKORDI, is a PhD candidate at the the Center for Humanities Research (University of Western Cape) and at the Otto-Suhr Institute of Social and Political Science (Freie University of Berlin).