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**DEATH AND ONE OF ITS MANY NARRATIVES:
THE STORY OF THE STOLPERSTEINE-PROJECT IN GERMANY**

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ABSTRACT

Within the contemporary German society, there is an initiative that has been ongoing for over 25 years. This initiative is called the *Stolperschwelle* which is conducted to commemorate the falling victims of the Nazi. An artist named Gunter Demnig started the whole project in 1992, and in 2017 – with the support of the society – he succeeded to place the 70.000th stumbling stone (in German; *Stolpersteine*), a 96 mm x 96 mm x 100mm brass plaques in the pavement of the last victim's address. At first, it was meant to remember the death of the Jewish during the Nazi era, but nowadays the stumbling stones also represent the death of the marginalized groups including the Gipsy, the homosexuals, people with physical disability, and people who are falsely accused because of their religious and political belief. In the *Stolpersteine*-project, anybody can show their respect for the victims of the Nazi by sponsoring a stumbling stone – its manufacture and its installation for 120 euro – dedicated to one victim. This article analyses how this *Stolpersteine-project* can be viewed from various perspectives by using socio-cultural, historical, and urban landscape perspectives. The study is conducted using a qualitative approach through literature review. The findings show that the main story evolving around the *Stolperstein* project is the death of someone, caused by extremely terrible matter. By engaging in the *Stolperstein*, the modern German society tries to commemorate someone's death, even someone they do not personally know. The historical perspective looks at the difference of microhistory and macrohistory when it comes to one nation's history. In the *Stolpersteine* project, people deal greatly with microhistory. Finally, the urban landscape perspective emphasizes that the construction of space can contribute to reliving the past as well as building a better understanding for a nation's generation.

KEYWORDS: contemporary German society, holocaust, mourning/commemorating, stumbling stones.

INTRODUCTION

In human life, there are several stages marked by some changes in age. These stages begin with birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, marriage, old age, and death. Within various cultures, a ritual is usually carried out to mark the entry of a person into a certain stage. For example, there are a tooth-cutting ceremony (*Mesangih* or *Mepandes* ceremony) to mark one's maturity in Balinese society and a *tedak siten* ceremony to celebrate the moment a baby first

touches the ground in Javanese culture. The *tedak sinten* ceremony is performed when the child is 7 months old, and it bears a hope that the child will grow to be an independent child.

To mark the final stage in life, namely death, various rituals are also performed. The Toraja people in South Sulawesi, for example, consider that the death of their family members begins through a slow process. People who have passed away are considered as 'sick people' or 'sleeping people.' Therefore, the bodies are still considered as a part of the family and treated as usual in their daily life, such as being clothed, taken care, and fed. If the family who is left behind is ready to carry out a funeral, a ceremony called *Rambu Solo* will be held. This ceremony is heavily filled with the elements of Toraja culture and requires a lot of money. Therefore, it often takes a long time for the families to prepare this ceremony. In this ceremony, a buffalo is offered to bring the departed soul to the afterlife. In addition, the coffin was placed on a cliff slope. They believe that the higher the location of the coffin, the faster the soul will go to nirvana (<https://ideas.ted.com/11-fascinating-funeral-traditions-from-around-the-globe/>).

Death rituals may look or sound strange, but in fact the way one society comprehends death is different from other communities. Differences in religion or belief also influence how people carry out the process of death. The beliefs and values determine a procession to celebrate the stages of human life which then produce various meaningful cultural patterns. In Indonesia, the influence of Islamic beliefs is very heavy because the majority of the population is Muslim. According to Islam, the procession of treating the dead bodies is a part of worship. The last prophet of Islam, Muhammad PBUH has said that the process of bathing, wrapping with the shroud, praying for the dead, and putting the bodies in the ground should not be delayed because the meeting of the "spirits of the dead" with their God must be hastened. Therefore, in Indonesian culture which is particularly influenced by Islam, there are a few rituals related to the body, for it must be buried immediately. The rituals that are carried out are actually more related to the survivors, such as the Holy Qur'an recitation to mark the 7th day, 40th day, until the 1000th day of the death (which is an acculturation between Islam and pre-Islamic religions in Java). It is different from the influence of Buddhism which still allows rituals that are directly related to the body during several days after death, as long as the body has not been buried or cremated. Regardless of the colours of cultural or religious features, rituals related to death attract the attention of both scholars and common people.

SOCIAL ASPECTS IN DEATH

In various death rituals found around the world, it is obvious that such ritual has distinct strong social aspects. In the Toraja community's example, while carrying out the burial procession, strong cooperation from the residents in one village is needed to help one family celebrate the final stages of their family member. On this occasion, they work together to carry out a funeral ritual. It is similar to the Balinese people during their *Ngaben* tradition. On this occasion, many people who are not part of the deceased's family want to participate, so the event runs smoothly and is filled with festive.

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In various countries around the world, there are unique traditions carried out in order to 'celebrate' the last life cycle of human. If this tradition is observed, the rituals are not actually performed for the sake of the deceased. Those who will get the 'benefit' from this ritual are the people left behind. On one side, the ritual can help them heal the sadness caused by the departure of a loved one. On the other hand, the ritual will slowly prepare them to continue their lives. In Europe, especially in Germany during pre-modern times, there was an assumption that death which brought sadness was more likely considered as something normal or part of human life, so that sadness no longer needed to be dramatized and exaggerated. Social phenomena such as disease and poverty might be the reason for death. However, such things should have been discussed openly because losing a life due to illness and poverty was not a disgrace to be hidden. By discussing it explicitly, there was a possibility that the social problem could be resolved. In the perspective of the German society at that time, which was already very pragmatic, there was an assumption that humans did not need to feel confused to express their sadness because at that time, people already knew how, when, and where someone could channel their feelings of loss (Sörries, 2012).

Mourning dress, for example, is an example of how German society during the 16-17th century controlled how a person expressed sadness (Sörries, 2012). A widow who lost her husband must wear this dress for one year. Norms of the society also expected that the person must adjust her behaviour by wearing this mourning dress. She was expected to explicitly show that she was indeed in mourning by not showing much excitement. Although there were such rules, there was one thing that was not openly discussed namely the psychological condition of the people who mourned. What appeared on the outside might be an expression of sadness, but how she/he really felt might not be known unless she/he said it explicitly. The mourning norm at that time stipulated that this mourning dress must be worn by the widow for one year, but the feeling of sadness and loss could not necessarily disappear within a period of one or two years.

From the above illustration, it appeared that death was a collective problem. Death was someone else's business because the feeling of sadness must be displayed to the outside world. Other people must be able to recognize that someone was in mourning. Discussions about the ritual of death are becoming increasingly interesting because recently there has been a shift. Death is no longer considered as a collective but is a personal matter (Sörries, 2012). The way someone expresses their sadness is determined by themselves, not by the community. At this point, it is necessary to understand that sadness is not a matter of behaviour but a matter of emotional expression. In English, psychological conditions in the form of sadness caused by death are called grief, while someone's effort to channel their sadness is called mourning. In German, both meanings are expressed in the same word, differing only in word classes, namely *Trauer* (which is a noun) for grief, and *trauern* (which is a verb) for mourning (Sörries, 2012).

From the obituary that appears in Germany currently, it seems that the main focus is the people left behind. In the text, the family left behind can state explicitly that they do not want to involve others in the mourning procession, so the obituary really only serves as a notification, and not as an invitation to participate in the death procession. These points for example are stated by

‘*die Trauerfeier hat in aller Stille / im engsten Familienkreis stattgefunden*’ which means "a simple funeral procession has taken place / within the immediate family environment." The sentence uses the past tense (*hat ... stattgefunden*), which states that the procession has taken place, so the obituary only wants to convey what has been done, not to invite. There is another sentence, for example ‘*von Trauerbekundung an Grab Abstand zu nehmen*’ which means "it is hoped that condolences at the grave are not overreacted" (Sörries, 2012). For non-Germans, such verbal expressions may be surprising, but the texts imply that sadness is a very private emotion for the Germans. The unwillingness to involve others in the emotions that one experiences is a choice that can be made by everyone. Everyone has the right to mourn and has the freedom to express his sadness as he wants.

FROM ‘MOURNING’ TO ‘COMMEMORATING’

Based on the above explanation, there are several implications. First, in general, death is a biological phenomenon that is closely related to the implementation of a ritual. I can imagine that the ritual might not be limited to one ritual since death is the 'end' of human life. Second, the ritual can be performed directly after the death (in German *unmittelbar*, which means direct), or carried out several years after the death (*mittelbar* which means indirect). From the introduction of this paper, which explains the rituals of death in Indonesia, it appears that the rituals carried out soon after the time of death are usually religious or spiritual. Meanwhile, the ritual which is conducted long after the death is usually socio-cultural. It means that sad emotions may have disappeared and the process of mourning may be considered complete. However, by carrying out the ritual, there is an effort to always remember people who have passed away. The last respect can always be done by those who are left behind although they may not necessarily know the person who passed away because of the different time span.

Both in mourning and commemorating, there are always two aspects involved namely personal and collective aspects. Mourning is a process that I experienced as an individual when, for example, my parents passed away, so natural mourning was personal. I can also experience mourning on a communal level when, as part of a community, I feel the loss after the death of a great figure for the nation (for example the former President of the Republic of Indonesia, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie) and for the world (for example Princess Diana). Even though I do not know these people personally, I still feel a pretty deep loss.

During the history of a nation, uncomfortable events often occur which later bring great trauma to the nation. This historical event can also cause a person to feel sorrow at the communal level. The Holocaust events in Germany during the Second World War and the 2004 Tsunami disaster in Indonesia are examples of events in which we as part of a community must feel deep sorrow. If we feel 'grief' at the personal level, maybe the emotion we feel is 'empathy' at the communal level. The sadness that we feel cannot be personal because we do not know the person who passed away. The dominant feeling is empathy which means we can share the sadness felt by those left behind, even though we are not involved in the direct mourning process.

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The mourning process at the communal level occurs, for example, when various places in Indonesia and the world took part in raising the half-mast flag as a symbol of deep sorrow after the Aceh Tsunami. Even people in other parts of the world are taking concrete actions to help ease the burden on the victims, namely by collecting donations in the form of money, second-hand clothes, and food. At the communal level, there can be a desire to do a process in which we try to remember the people who have left us (commemoration / memorialisation). This process can be carried out years after the event and involve many people, such as the *Stolpersteine* project. However, Ward (n.d.) stated in her work “*although all Stolpersteine represent and memorialise individuals, those individuals are all inherently connected by a shared journey of persecution, suffering and ultimately, death*”. This, once again, shows, us that by remembering the victim, we try to imagine the horror they had to endure during the last hour and the most painful time of their life.

The *Stolpersteine* Movement is a project initiated by an artist named Gunter Demnig since 1992. He initiated a project called the *Stolpersteine* project or the Stumbling Stone project. This project aims to commemorate the victims of the atrocities of the Nazi regime in the Second World War. At first, this project took place in Germany. Installation of the stones was mostly done in big cities in Germany, but, as the time went by, the installation area of this stone is getting wider. According to the official website of this project (<http://www.Stolpersteine.eu/en/home>), there are already 1200 cities in Germany where *Stolpersteine* can be found. The initiative then expanded to Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, and Ukraine. Currently, there are already more than 70,000 stones placed by Gunter Demnig (<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18/stumbling-stones-a-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance>). Even if the *Stolpersteine* project is present in many countries, in each of those countries the experience is unique, depending on the nation's memory or history. However these experiences are connected by the same objective, namely “trying to invite passing pedestrians to stop, read and wonder” (Hernández-Grande, 2020). Reflective questions like “who were these individuals?” or “what must it have been like to leave this street for the final time?” temporarily linger in their mind.

Based on the information obtained from the project's official website, the aim of Demnig to undertake this project is 'not to forget'. Demnig quoted the Talmud, which says that "a person is only forgotten when his or her name is forgotten". The *Stolpersteine* was placed in front of the victim's last residence (or at least what is known as his last address) and begins with the phrase ‘here lived ...’. One stone represents one name and one individual who became the victim of the cruelty of the Nazi regime. This project received a lot of positive reactions and invited many people to participate. People who are interested in ordering and financing the installation of *Stolpersteine* can do so by paying 120 Euros or around 2,000,000 IDR.

The examples of *Stolpersteine* are as follows:



Figure 1:
Stolpersteine on the streets of Berlin.
(personal photo collection, taken in 2009)



Figure 2:
Stolpersteine, collection at the Sepulkril Museum in the city of Kassel, Germany.
(personal photo collection, taken in 2014)

Although this object in German is called *Stein* (in Indonesian, it means stone), the object referred to in the project is not stone, but a plate made of brass measuring 10cm x 10cm. In this project, this object is placed in front of the victim's last residence (as in figure 1). As explained earlier, the aim of Gunter Demnig to undertake this project was for the German community to remember the

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victim of Nazi violence as an individual, not as an anonymous Jewish ethnic victim among 6 million Nazi victims (in total there were 13 million Nazi victims from various groups of people). In big cities in Germany, if we walk along the streets, we will often find *Stolpersteine*. On the stone, a name, year and place of death were carved. To read this information, it is not uncommon for us to bend down because the writing is small and cannot be read directly by the eye. This gesture of bowing can also be interpreted as a form of respect for the victims who passed away.

The interesting part is that the *Stolpersteine* project shows that the death of a person does not only affect his family, but also the people who do not know him/her. This is because, in the *Stolpersteine* project, the enthusiasts often come from a group of people who do not know the Holocaust victims personally. In accordance with the provisions of this project, people who are interested in ordering *Stolpersteine* must do their own search for the victim's biography and the victim's last known address. Thus, the remembrance effort is not a ritual that is only present at the communal level but again becomes a personal matter. This shows that in the death and the scope of the ritual, the personal and collective aspects are always present.

Grimstad (2019) calls this process a belated process of mourning. The process of remembering, especially if it is related to the dark history of a nation has a very positive goal which is for the young generation to learn from history and not to repeat bad events that are detrimental to many parties. The *Stolpersteine* Project, which was carried out to commemorate and remember the victims of the atrocities of the Nazi regime, was part of commemoration and memorialisation. This project can be reviewed from three perspectives, namely the perspective of historical geography, urban studies, and cultural traditions. In the historical perspective, there is a concept called microhistory (Simon, 2015), which is a method that seeks to express complex historical events through special or individual narratives. According to Simon (2015) and to Brewer (2017), this concept is equivalent to the German word *Alltaggeschichte* (meaning: everyday history). Microhistory was born out of the dissatisfaction of macrohistory, which is an attempt to capture an historical event through a monument or museum. The efforts to present history at a macro level are usually state-sponsored, state-driven, and state-sanctioned (Cook and van Riemsdijk, 2014). The type of microhistory is considered more personal because the meaning is deeper for the families left behind.

In the study of historical geography, many researchers are aware that the role of individuals in the commemoration process can be as consumers or as producers. Further discussion in this study narrows down to three things, namely the involvement of individuals in the process of remembrance, subjects in the process of remembrance (who will be remembered or remembered), and personal reactions to the process of remembrance. Cook and van Riemsdijk (2014) conclude that there are four effects that are formed through the involvement of individuals in the *Stolpersteine* project, at least in the city of Berlin. The four effects are transforming narratives of the past into landscapes, interpreting and co-constructing stone meanings at *Stolpersteine* installations, questioning narratives about the Holocaust funded by the state through the memory of individual victims, and creating new understandings regarding the cultural landscape of the past and present through daily 'encounters' with *Stolpersteine*.

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The first effect is the historical narrative of the past which is converted into urban space or landscape construction. This is a new breakthrough because usually narratives about historical events can be found in museums, or read in history books. Through *Stolpersteine*, the dark history of the German state is found in everyday life. One only needs to pay attention to the path he/she is walking on, and then find stones that tell stories about a person's life. The second is stone or brass slab, which is not considered a luxurious and expensive material. In the *Stolpersteine* project, it has a higher meaning because it is used as a narrative tool to narrate someone's life. The third effect is that the *Stolpersteine* phenomenon becomes an attempt to question which part of history is displayed in historical monuments that are central and funded by the state. Some people think that there must be a part of history that was deliberately omitted in the narrative created by the state. Apart from that, the most important is that there is a shift in the perspective of storytelling, from what was once a macro to a micro, from the point of view of a particular country or community to an individual point of view. The microhistory exemplified by the *Stolpersteine* project is interested on narrating the life of an individual, viewing it as "a window" or "a lense" to a person's biography (Gamsa, 2017). But, he argued further that such practice would only bring a significant impact when it is applied on certain celebrities or prominent people, not to "ordinary people" alike. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that every victim has their own story. The last effect is that the daily contact produced by *Stolpersteine* makes people think that past events must have a connection with the present. The young German generation must learn to respect past events, even if it is a dark past. By talking about the past in the present, it is hoped that bad events in the past will not be repeated and some lessons can be learnt.

Although this perspective is a historical geography perspective, it cannot be denied that psychological aspects play a role. *Stolpersteine* is a collective initiative which is not united by grief, but by empathy. The purpose of the community to carry out this initiative is not to mourn, but to remember the victims as individuals who have passed away. At the personal level, there is an assumption that a person is considered dead if there is no longer anyone who talks about or mentions his/her name. At the collective level, the same perception also exists. When the victim who passed away as a result of the cruelty of the Nazim regime began to be "discussed" in *Stolpersteine*, at that moment he was "alive" again.

In the capital of Germany, Berlin, more than 20 monuments were erected in memory of Nazi victims. The current most famous monument is *the Memorial of the Murdered Jews in Europa* by American artist Peter Eisenman, which is a large pillar-like building and a maze-shaped building. Monuments such as *the Memorial of the Murdered Jews in Europa* are state-sponsored monuments, while projects such as *Stolpersteine* are personal initiatives. *The Memorial of the Murdered Jews in Europa* monument interprets the Holocaust as the dark history of a country, while *Stolpersteine* focuses more on the tragedy experienced by an individual. Guardian newspaper reviews the *Stolpersteine* phenomenon as follows: "*the stones represent a new vision of urban remembrance. [...], the Stolpersteine focus on its individual tragedies*". ([https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18 / stumbling-stones-a-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance](https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18/stumbling-stones-a-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance)).

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Initially, Gunter Demnig undertook this project aiming to remember the deaths of victims from the Jewish community in the Holocaust incident in Germany. During its development, *Stolpersteine* does not only focus on Jewish society but also the marginalized groups who were victims of the Holocaust, namely the Gypsy, the people with physical disability, the opposition groups, the Afro-German communities, and societies considered asocial such as homosexuals. The 70,000th stone laid by Demnig is intended for Willy Zimmerer, a German man suffering from learning difficulties who was killed at the Hadamar psychiatric hospital outside Frankfurt in 1944 ([https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18 / stumbling-stones-a-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance](https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/feb/18/stumbling-stones-a-different-vision-of-holocaust-remembrance)).

If the goal of *Stolpersteine* was that the Nazi victims were not forgotten and still had a 'voice' in the current situation despite having passed away decades ago, how could they return 'alive' and 'talk' to people living in the present? The answer lies in the process of making and installing *Stolpersteine*. Firstly, a person who orders *Stolpersteine* must do some researches on the biography of the victim he/she chooses. This victim can be someone he/she really knows personally, such as a member of his own family, or someone he/she does not know. After the data is obtained, he/she must obtain permission from the local authority regarding the location of *Stolpersteine*'s location. He/she must know the last recorded address of the victim before he/she passed away. The customer must also plan a ceremonial ceremony for installing the stones. On that occasion, he/she must read a narration about the victim. There are times when he/she also invites the media and the families of these victims. In the process, the victim seems to 'tell' a story to the survivor about the suffering through *Stolpersteine*'s message, and the people who hear it can take valuable lessons from the incident.

In an effort to remember events that are actually very bitter, the writings of Ashley Kaplan (2019) can give us a picture of the experience from a Jewish couple named Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spritzer who did a recollection with Marianne's parents. In 1998, the couple travelled to Czernowitz, a city in the country of Ukraine, with Marianne's parents. The city has a bad memory for Marianne's parents because they experienced the cruelty and horror of the Holocaust during the Second World War. During the trip, Marianne and Leo let their parents tell their bad experiences while walking through the city, which they had actually told Marianne before. Despite having heard it before, on that occasion, Marianne realized that the construction of space was very influential on the change of memory and the previously negative impression became more positive. For Marianne, a trip to Czernowitz with her parents made it possible to create a new memory for Marianne's parents. This is a proof that memory is a fluid process. Memory can always be reconstructed. By being in a space or landscape, the place where the bad events actually happened and the traumatic past can turn into new memories as well as 'revive' the people who have passed away (Ashley Kaplan, 2019).

The *Stolpersteine* project proves two things. First, people who want to participate can 'create' history. This certainly does not mean that history that actually happened in the past is eliminated or forgotten. Through this project, history is not only read in books, and society does not only act as a consumer. However, the community can play a role as a producer because they

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must explore other narratives regarding the victims who may escape the attention of monuments or large-scale memorials sponsored by the State. In addition, the *Stolpersteine* project also provides 'reminders' to the current people that issues such as *antisemitism*, racism, and xenophobia still haunt the world and are likely to be repeated (Ashley Kaplan, 2019). Second, *Stolpersteine* proved that the victims did not really disappear from this world when they were still being discussed by those left behind. As in the story of Marianne and Leo, who felt how a story could really come back to life when told at the scene, the *Stolpersteine* project 'returned' the victims to where they had lived before being snatched away and forcibly fetched by Nazi soldiers. By imagining the horror, history seems to be experienced by us. The end result is that we can feel a great deal of deep empathy for the victims, whether we know them personally or not.

Although the *Stolpersteine* project looks like a very positive initiative and brings enormous benefits to the future of a nation, there are also views that criticize this movement such as Ashley-Kaplan (2019). His writing highlights two sides of the *Stolpersteine* project. First, the initial idea of *Stolpersteine* was that German society in particular and other countries in general could remember the victims of the Nazi regime. However, according to Ashley-Kaplan, it is difficult to be sure that the community truly "contemplates" and "remembers" the victims because there is still a possibility that they ignore the things they see on the road when they walk there. Ashley-Kaplan also questions whether the victim's family still visited this place long after the stone installation took place. Ashley-Kaplan's writing triggers some awareness that there is a possibility that this project is forgotten.

Ashley-Kaplan (2019, p. 59) explains the following matters:

I wonder whether the passerby have seen the curious taking photos a zillion times and what it might feel like for them to walk familiar routes past a succession of gawkers from all over the world capturing images of these unimposing but very powerful memorials. I wonder if those on the stones who may have surviving families have been visited in these not-graves by their families after the initial captured moment of their installation? Sometimes the stones look newly polished and cared for; sometimes they look foot worn but forgotten.

Ashley-Kaplan reminds us that sometimes the 'romance' regarding the willingness to remember someone will still be defeated by pragmatism. When people walk around and try to do tasks and live their lives, there is a tendency that they ignore things that are considered not important. A person's busy life during his day can make him no longer devote concentration to the things around him, especially if it is visible on the surface of the road which incidentally is 'below' and not in the direction of the eye. In other words, Ashley-Kaplan observes that the process of remembering is indeed intended for the families left behind, not the wider community.

Furthermore, in his writing, Ashley-Kaplan (2019) states that sometimes history is shaped like a network. Because the interest in creating *Stolpersteine* does not only cover Germany, but also includes several countries in Europe, this initiative can be considered an international project. This project succeeded in turning objects or material that is tangible like a stone into a small

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monument or memorial art. The 'stones' form an interconnected network, or network obtained from a particular memory mapping. Volmert's writing (2017) also highlights this point. The *Stolpersteine* project is considered as commemoration or the process of remembering an event, and the process of collecting historical narratives is interactive which means that it can be done by the ordering the *Stolpersteine*. During this process, the dominant process is connectivity instead of collectivism. This means that the historical facts or biographies of the victims are not only collected just like that, but the relationship is also sought. Often the narration is obtained from various sources, for example from family, friends, even from the state or authorities who hold documentation regarding Nazi victims. The huge amount of data must be confirmed, and if there is an error found, for example the location of the last residence, the information recorded or the location of the *Stolpersteine* can be changed (Volmert, 2017). Volmert stated that by returning the victim to the last known address, it was as if the victim was 'returned' to life.

Currently, the *Stolpersteine*-project initiative has been classified as a large-scale project, which Ashley-Kaplan refers to as 'networking'. The 'network' is now even broader with the *#KeinVerblassen* initiative. This initiative usually becomes more active towards November, considering that in November, precisely on November 9th, 1938, there was also a gloomy event in the history of the German state. The event was known as *Kristallnacht*, or Crystal Night. During that incident, there was a massacre of Jewish ethnic communities, which also involved the destruction of places of worship, offices and homes. Thousands of ethnic Jews have become the victims. They are persecuted, captured, and killed. Tonight it is referred to as *Kristallnacht* because of the sounds generated by broken glass from their synagogues and homes. This event is also referred to as *Reichspogromnacht*. *Pogrom* is a German term derived from Russian – which etymologically means 'cleansing'. *Pogrom* is defined as the oppression of groups of people who have different religions, nationalities and ethnicities from the perpetrators. In *Pogrom*, in addition to damage to infrastructure, such as houses and houses of worship, there was also a murder (<http://www.politik-lexikon.at/pogrom/>).

The connection between this event and the *Stolpersteine* project and its function as a place to remember is that with the *#KeinVerblassen* initiative, the community remember the victims by cleaning the *Stolpersteine* stones, which may be increasingly damaged or the golden colour of the brass material getting faded. *Verblassen* is a German word meaning 'to fade', which can be used both in the context of colour and in the context of memory. 'Fading memory' means that the memory is increasingly lost from someone's mind. This *#KeinVerblassen* initiative seeks to arouse public awareness to independently clean up the *Stolpersteine* stone they found. If they are interested, they can photograph the stones that have shone again and upload them on Twitter with the hashtag *#KeinVerblassen*. The Twitter account that started this action is called *Die Polierer* which means 'people who brush'. The core of this activity is certainly not the clean-up, but the aim not to make a memory (even though it is a bad memory for the nation's history) fade or the aim to continue to be remembered by its successors so that similar incidents do not happen again. The campaign against the anti-Semitic movement is indeed very intense in Germany. The people involved in the network felt the need to campaign for this movement because they saw many

examples of incidents of hatred and intolerance¹ are currently occurring in Germany.

The online media *stern* (<https://www.stern.de/politik/deutschland/stolpersteine--aktivisten-polieren-gedenktafeln-auf-hochglanz>) reviewed the *#KeinVerblassen* initiative positively by saying "*Die Polier-Aktion ist ein Paradebeispiel dafür, wie Activist im Netz zum positiven gesellschaftlichen Engagement in der echten Welt werden kann*" which means 'This clean-up activity is an example of how activity in cyberspace can be used to increase community involvement in positive actions in the real world '.

CLOSING

The *Stolpersteine* movement in Germany shows us that life and death are like two sides of a coin. In the rituals of death, there is a more focused effort on the person who is still alive, so that he/she is able to continue his/her life which is still ongoing. In commemoration or remembrance efforts, there is a goal which is the death of people in the past can remind people in the present so that bad events in the past will not be repeated. In Indonesia, we know there is an action called *Kamisan*, a movement initiated by the mother of one of the victims of the *Semanggi Incident* in 1998 so that the responsible person can be prosecuted. This incident becomes a reminder of one dark history that once happened in Indonesia. *Stolpersteine* also carries the same passion. The death of 6 million Jewish people will always be a reminder that basically there is always threat of intolerance and radicalism in a plural state. As a nation, Germany was in mourning when the Nazi regime came to power and devastated the social order in Germany, following the defeat of Germany during World War 2. With the *Stolpersteine* project, the victims of the Nazi regime tried to 'speak up' so that the new German generation continue to learn from the dark history of the nation.

¹ Currently, in the German parliament, there is an opposition party named *Alternative für Deutschland* (usually abbreviated AfD). The party is now the third largest party in the German parliament, and currently has a seat in the European Union parliament. The policy of this party is to reject the policy of the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, who welcomed the arrival of immigrants to German. Particularly, the party reject immigrants from Arab countries. Since 2015 until present, there have been 1.5 million immigrants living in Germany. Concretely, the AfD wants Germany to close German borders, tighten identity checks for migrants, and set up camps that prevent newcomers from entering Germany. Because of this tightness, the party is considered to be ultra-right, which increasingly leads to racism-nationalism and anti-terrorism. One of the characteristics of the party is that this party limits media access to news coverage of the party's activities. The movements carried out by this party were considered by some Germans as the forerunner to the growth of racism in Germany. Community actions such as *Stolpersteine* are seen as an effort to reduce this threat (<https://www.dw.com/en/afd-what-you-need-to-know-about-germanys-far-right-party/a-37208199>).

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