

Wintersemester 2025/2026

Dienstag 18. 11. 2025 | 16.15–17.45 Uhr | H6 (Geo I)

Moving monuments – embodying socialism: linking past memories with future aspirations in dance

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Focusing on young people in motion, this paper examines past memories and present sensations of hip hop dancing in the late socialist city. The paper presents two case studies, the Soviet Vietnamese Friendship Palace, colloquially referred to as *cung xô*, and the Lenin Monument in Hanoi, to demonstrate the changing rhythms of public space's use and symbolic communicative functions. Both monuments were built in the period of socialist urban planning as icons of the socialist city. While still serving as stages for official celebrations, both spaces have come to be used for diverse activities, among them also breaking, popping, waacking and hip hop dance. For the young practitioners of hip hop, who were all born after the introduction of the economic reforms program called *Đổi mới*, these spaces connote the origin of hip hop in Vietnam. Although dancers no longer have access to the Soviet Vietnamese Friendship Palace, the palimpsest of graffiti and tags on the walls, invoke past memories of motions conducted in the palace's colonnades. The Lenin Monument, by contrast, is maintained as an open space for hip hop in the city, inviting more and more young people to participate. In dance practice, young people link past memories to present sensations, thereby shifting the meanings of socialist monuments.



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