

Neuchâtel, 23 March 2023

Go in search of the colonial marks of Neuchâtel

Neuchâtel continues to shed light on its past with the opening of a connected walk, which takes the public to emblematic places of the town that are linked with the history of slavery and colonisation. "Neuchâtel, colonial marks" follows on from the actions taken by the City Council to raise awareness of this period of history and promote a greater inclusion of all persons in the public space.

The Neuchâtel authorities' [report](#), which was approved by the General Council in September 2021, planned to design an educational walk to address the question of Neuchâtel's involvement in the slave trade, slavery and colonialism. [Other measures](#) have already been set up, such as installing a piece of artwork and an explanatory plaque at the foot of the statue representing David de Pury.

The walk has been called "Neuchâtel, colonial marks (Neuchâtel, empreintes coloniales in French)" and it is available as of today in the catalogue of the Totemi mobile application, alongside "Ghosts of the belle époque (Fantômes de la Belle époque)" or "Neuchâtel before-after (Neuchâtel avant-après)". This new walk is intended for tourists as well as people from Neuchâtel, and it will be completed by an educational guide intended for schools.

"We think that thanks to the recent contributions of specialists, it is possible for the public to have better knowledge of history and a clearer idea of the remarkable aspects as well as the darker chapters of our past. Having better knowledge of history can also have positive consequences on social cohesion and help in the prevention against racism.", said Thomas Facchinetti, in charge of culture, integration and social cohesion, during the presentation of the walk to the media.

Whatsapp, quiz, videos and computer graphics

The Hôtel Pourtalès and the Hôtel DuPeyrou, the Collège Latin, the main post office, the presence of Suchard, not to mention the famous de Pury statue are all themes that are successively addressed by posts on each subject, during a walk lasting about one hour. At each stage, you are proposed a quiz to take a new look on an as-

pect of Neuchâtel, and then you can watch a video, explore computer graphics, and even receive a Whatsapp call from a specialist of the historical context in question.

“For example, visitors will be asked how many statues of David de Pury there are in Neuchâtel, or which African countries do not appear on the exterior façade of the main post office, explained Mélanie Huguenin-Virchaux and Matthieu Gillabert, co-designers of the walk. At the end of the walk, visitors will have recent knowledge of how people from Neuchâtel were involved in the slavery and colonial system between the 16th and the 19th centuries”, said the two historians.

The “colonial marks” walk, which describes the context and history – or tells the stories – brought to light by seven buildings and squares in Neuchâtel, also offers the possibility for students and persons undergoing training to expand their knowledge on the past of their region. *“This walk gives students the opportunity to perceive in a concrete way how issues in world history are translated at the local level. Direct links can be made between the interactive walk and teaching resources, especially in the third cycle”, explained the cultural mediator Sylvie Pipoz.*

A spring under the sign of the opening to the world

The launch of this application coincides with the Action week against racism ([Semaine d'actions contre le racisme](#)), organised by the Forum tous différents tous égaux, the Canton of Neuchâtel and around sixty associations and institutions including the City of Neuchâtel, which started on 18 March. It also coincides with the Cultural spring in Neuchâtel ([Printemps culturel Neuchâtel](#)) which runs until the 21 June, on the theme of “Black Americas”.

“With the European Week taking place at the beginning of May, this spring's events show that our town and our canton are taking the shape of a place that wishes to promote humanist openness and ideals of social justice, equal dignity and peace, in a world marked by the return of war and the rise of populism”, concluded the City councillor Thomas Facchinetti.

For the launch of the walk, free guided visits are organised on **Thursday 23 March at 5:30 pm** and are open to all. The meeting point for the start is in front of the main post office (Hôtel des Postes). On the same day, the Ethnography museum will welcome Mélanie Huguenin-Virchaux and Matthieu Gillabert for a conference on the design of the walk, entitled “Dans la fabrique du parcours Neuchâtel, empreintes coloniales” **at 8:15 pm** (free entry without registration). Two other guided visits are also organised on **29 April at 2:00 pm** and on **24 May at 6:00 pm**. They will be preceded by an introduction of the co-designers at the Art and history museum of Neuchâtel (Musée d'art et d'histoire de Neuchâtel).



**→ "Neuchâtel, empreintes coloniales", on the Totemi free application.
Duration of the walk 1 hour, 1km, 7 chapters, free visit as of 23 March.**

City of Neuchâtel

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