# **1. Introduction**

During May and June 2020, following the murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis, dozens of monuments were toppled worldwide. In the Southern US, in the Caribbean, and across Europe, activists targeted monuments representing White supremacy and colonialism, pulling them down one by one, and thus turning statue removals into a global phenomenon. While George Floyd’s death and Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests provided a flashpoint for removing monuments in 2020, it was the #RhodesMustFall (RMF) movement at University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa in 2015 that pioneered the current wave of Fallism,[[1]](#footnote-1) a term initially coined by South African activists. The proposed research will focus on five Fallist movements and campaigns formed between 2015 and 2017, in South Africa, the UK, the US, and the Caribbean; it will explore how the demand to “Take them down” became a global movement and what this can reveal about the agendas and practices of contemporary political struggles.

On March 9, 2015, Chumani Maxwele, a student at UCT, threw a bucket of feces at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes (Verbaan, 2015), one of the leading proponents of British imperialism in South Africa. Portions of Rhodes’s estate were used to build part of the UCT campus and to endow the Rhodes scholarships at Oxford University (Rotberg, 1988). Maxwele’s defiant action ignited protests around campus and on social media under the slogan #RhodesMustFall (News24, 2015). The protests included demonstrations, rallies, and occupation of the UCT administration building, which protesters renamed Azania House (Naicker, 2015; Ahmed, 2019). The students’ primary demand was the removal of Rhodes’s statue as a starting point for the decolonization of the university, which included reforming its curriculum to become more Afrocentric (UCT: Rhodes Must Fall, 2015). Other demands included renaming buildings across the UCT campus, ending the outsourcing of employment, and increasing the number of Black lecturers. After a month of protests, the university removed Rhodes’s statue as a cheering crowd looked on.

With the help of social media, the RMF protests spread to other campuses across South Africa, where protesters were making demands similar to those at UCT (Luescher & Klemenčič, 2017; Naicker, 2015). The announcement of a 10% increase in tuition fees for 2016 sparked another wave of demonstrations in October 2015 at Witwatersrand (Wits) University, under the slogan #FeesMustFall (FMF) (Fihlani, 2019). The protests spread to 27 campuses, where students shut down classes (Desai, 2018). During one of the demonstrations, students marched to the South African parliament, demanding to speak with both the Higher Education Minister, Blade Nzimande, and the then-President, Jacob Zuma. The students ended up clashing with the police. After two days of demonstrations, President Zuma announced that there would be no increase in fees for 2016 (Booysen, 2016). The FMF protests erupted again in 2016 after the government announced an increase in tuition fees for 2017. This time, universities fought back against any shutdown attempts, employing private security and police officers on campuses. On several occasions, police ended up clashing with students (Desai, 2018). The protests ultimately died down, and in December 2017, President Zuma announced free higher education for students from low-income families (Davis, 2017).

The RMF movement became a source of inspiration for other Fallist movements. At Oxford University, the Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford (RMFO) movement was initiated by Oxford Pan-Afrikan Forum students as an act of solidarity with RMF (Chantiluke et al., 2018). Officially RMFO was formed in mid-2015, when, after a racist incident at a debate of the Oxford Union, RMFO began to organize rallies and meetings discussing why the Rhodes statue must be removed from the façade of Oriel College. The RMFO campaign gathered momentum in 2016, and the movement published its demands, which, besides the removal of Rhodes’s statue, included decolonization of the curriculum, greater representation of marginalized groups, and an end to all forms of oppression in Oxford (RMFO, 2015). The demand to remove the Rhodes statue met with objections from public figures at Oxford University and across the UK (Waygood, 2017). Eventually, after six months of consultations, Oriel College announced that the statue would remain in place. By mid-2017, the movement had dissipated (Ahmed, 2019b).

The RMFO campaign was reignited again in June 2020 by the BLM protests in the US and the UK. This time, RMFO gained greater support from both Oriel College and the public, with the College announcing its intention to remove the Rhodes statue (Coughlan, 2020a). In response, RMFO asserted that it would continue to fight until Oxford University removed the statue, and continued to pursue its demands for the decolonization of the university (RMFO, 2020). At the time of writing, Rhodes’s statue has not been removed, and Oxford University awaits the decision of its commission regarding the statue’s future, which was recently postponed to spring 2021 (Mills, 2020).

Another movement inspired by RMF and RMFO campaigns is the Cross Rhodes Freedom Project (CRFP) in Trinidad and Tobago (TT). The movement, formed in 2017, initiated the campaign RMF Caribbean (RMFC), the primary mission of which is to end the glorification of colonial icons, with a focus on the removal of statues of Christopher Columbus from Port of Spain and Moruga in TT (CRFP, 2020). CRFP frames its struggle as an emancipatory mission of “confronting the past to free the future” (CRFP, 2020) and changing the relationship of the Caribbean peoples to history. The project also highlights the connections between TT’s colonial past and contemporary social challenges in the Caribbean, including economic and educational inequality, inadequate health services, and rising crime rates. So far, CRFP has had some success in pushing the University of the West Indies to rename its hall of residence, Milner Hall (named after Alfred Milner, a British colonial governor in South Africa), and its RMFC campaign continues (UWI TV Global, 2017).

Since 2015, in Bristol, UK the Countering Colston (CC) campaign has been working toward ending the celebration of Edward Colston across the city. Colston was a prominent figure in the Royal African Company; during his time as a merchant, he transported over 80,000 enslaved Africans to the West Indies, nearly 20,000 of whom died due to the harsh conditions on the ships (Bolden, 2020). Colston, who donated his fortune to various local causes, is one of Bristol’s most celebrated people, and his name is found on schools, buildings, street signs, and businesses across town (CC, 2020a; Dresser, 2009). Until recently, the most noticeable commemoration of Colston was his bronze statue in Bristol city center.

The main goals of the CC campaign focus on the commemoration of the slave trade, seeking acknowledgment of Bristol’s role in it, remembering the people who suffered from it, and celebrating those who resisted it. The campaign’s other goals are formulated in more general terms, such as repairing the effects of slavery and promoting ideas of human dignity and equality (CC, 2020b). By 2017, CC had succeeded in removing Colston’s name from a number of local schools and businesses and from Bristol’s concert venue Colston Hall[[2]](#footnote-2) (CC, 2020c; Saner, 2017). The campaign came to global attention in 2020 when, during a BLM protest following the death of George Floyd, activists toppled Colston’s statue and threw it into Bristol harbor (Grey, 2020). This event sparked a national conversation about racial inequality in the UK and its imperial past, inspiring demands to remove other controversial monuments across the country (Baynes & Osborne, 2020). More venues across Bristol have since removed Colston’s name. However, four protesters involved in the toppling of Colston’s statue are currently facing criminal charges (Alternative Bristol, 2020).

Finally, in 2017, the grassroots movement Take ’Em Down NOLA (TEDN) celebrated a small victory. After almost two years of legal battles, the city of New Orleans began its removal of four Confederate monuments (Park, 2017). TEDN was born out of the BLM protests that erupted in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. However, TEDN emerged as a fully organized movement a year later following a massacre in a South Carolina church, in which a White gunman murdered nine Black worshipers (Abdul, 2017). Following the shooting, TEDN demanded that the city remove all symbols of White supremacy, including 17 monuments, and rename dozens of squares, streets, and schools (TEDN, 2020a).

The shooting also led the mayor of New Orleans to initiate the removal of the four Confederate monuments already mentioned (Brumfield & Ellis, 2015). The city council approved the removal, which was soon halted by a lawsuit filed by several opposition groups (Park, 2017). During court deliberations, TEDN pursued its demands, initiating rallies, demonstrations, and marches across the city. Eventually, the court denied the lawsuit and cleared the way for the removal of the monuments. TEDN has since continued its campaign, focusing on statues and symbols across the city while also advocating on other social and racial issues affecting New Orleans’s Black community (TEDN, 2020c).

The five case studies presented above show that Fallism is a global phenomenon, in which activists worldwide use iconoclasm against monuments of White supremacy and colonialism to expose how the legacies of colonialism, apartheid, and slavery continue to dominate and oppress Black people long after they formally ended. The RMF/FMF protests in South Africa exposed the ongoing exclusion and feeling of alienation of Black students on campuses across South Africa. Framing their struggle within a decolonial framework, the so-called Born Free generation (those born after the end of the apartheid regime) expressed their disappointment and rejection of the utopic notion of Mandela’s Rainbow Nation. RMFO also framed its struggle as a decolonializing one, focusing on the decolonization of the university and highlighting the exclusion from the university setting of students and faculty not only from minority groups but also of different epistemologies, and forcing the university to reckon with its connections to British imperialism.

The CC campaign also confronts Britain’s imperial past with its focus on the legacy of slavery and its demands for acknowledgment of the part played by Bristol in that heritage. CC has also connected its campaign to a decolonial struggle calling to “Decolonize Bristol” (CC, 2020a). While the meaning of the decolonization of Bristol has yet to be fully articulated, CC has centered its agenda on equality and the ongoing effects of slavery on Bristol’s Black community. The CC campaign, which intersects with the BLM movement in the UK, also highlights racial inequality in Bristol. The CRFP campaign, which, like RMF/FMF, operates in a postcolonial setting, likewise uses decolonization and its impact on TT as a framework, often citing Frantz Fanon and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o as sources of inspiration for a decolonial struggle (CRFP, 2020). While TEDN does not necessarily use decolonization as its framework, the movement incorporates Black radical politics as part of its agenda and strives for social and economic justice for the Black community of New Orleans. Much like CC and the CRFP, TEDN also focuses on the impact of slavery on Black lives and highlights how Black lives are systematically dehumanized.

By demanding the removal of icons of White supremacy and colonialism, these campaigns expose different and interrelated forms of domination or, according to Quijano and others, modes of coloniality (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mingolo, 2009; Quijano, 2010). The fight against different modes of coloniality may explain Fallism as an interconnected struggle that goes beyond its local setting. However, while the various demands for the removal of monuments appear similar, several questions remain. Are the claims and agendas that have led the movements to target symbols and monuments really shared? What are the particularities of each movement? What trajectories have led activists to adopt similar language and frameworks in their local struggles? What are the political, social, and cultural implications of the campaigns’ focus on the act of removing monuments?

The various manifestations of Fallism across the globe may also be understood as part of a diffusion process in which social movements borrow and adopt frameworks, contentious repertoires, and demands from each other for use in their own local struggles. Social movements diffusion theory focuses on how different communication mechanisms, in the form of direct and indirect ties between activists (e.g. transnational networks, immigrants, mainstream media, and social media), shape the diffusion process. Therefore, using social movements diffusion theory to examine the dissemination of Fallism will allow us to understand how it has become a worldwide phenomenon. It will enable us to examine the local attributes of each case by exploring how and why activists have adapted different symbolic meanings to Fallism; what different routes Fallism has traveled; how the public and media response to the movements’ demands have shaped their campaigns; how activists reframe and recontextualize Fallism to their vernacular settings; and what similarities and divergences exist among them.

However, diffusion theory may capture only one aspect of Fallism as an interrelated struggle. The social, political, and ideological connections and solidarities between the movements can also be understood as a twenty-first-century articulation of Pan-Africanism, and this may signal a new Pan-African revival. Since the eighteenth century, Pan-Africanism has been a unifying concept for various political agendas and movements fighting against White supremacy and colonization and acting to improve the lives of Black people across the Atlantic World. The various Fallist movements express solidarity with one another, often citing each other as sources of inspiration or in order to highlight the global aspect of their struggles. Although Pan-Africanism has multiple meanings, some major questions are common to them all: How do Fallist movements articulate their own meaning of Pan-Africanism? What have Fallist movements adopted from the various meanings and reincarnations of Pan-Africanism over the years? Do Fallist movements construct their own Pan-African vision?

Finally, Fallism confronts the issue of commemoration and its dynamic character. All five campaigns under discussion here have underscored issues of heritage and its relation and relevance to their own social circumstances. RMF, CRFP, and TEDN assert that monuments to White supremacists such as Rhodes, Columbus, and Confederate heroes glorify their crimes. RMFO and CC argue that commemorating Rhodes and Colston whitewashes the British imperial past and its part in the dehumanization of Black and Brown people. Moreover, all these movements emphasize the pain and trauma that the monuments evoke and the need to replace them with monuments to those who have defied White supremacy. These demands highlight the various functions of commemoration in creating social memory and identity and as a site for political struggles, prompting the following questions: What are the symbolic functions of Fallism? How does each campaign interpret the commemorative role of the monuments?

The five case studies reflect differences in size, location, tactics, and platforms. Each case has been subject to some degree of media and academic scrutiny; Fallism in South Africa is the most widely documented and studied to date, while the other movements have attracted much less international attention (e.g. Ahmed, 2019b; Chantiluke et al., 2018; Naidoo, 2016). The different campaigns include specific demands within their local contexts; however, they also borrow from each other to enrich and expand their impact. Conducting both in-depth analysis of each case and comparisons between them will make it possible to unpack the transnational and local registers of Fallism. Comparisons between the five campaigns will enable us to see how Fallism operates in both postcolonial and noncolonial settings in the global North and South, allowing us to understand how different historical and social-political conditions shape its different meanings and variations.

# **2. Literature Review**

## ***2.1. Delinking: Fallism as a Decolonial Struggle***

Can the notion of Fallism be understood as the next phase of a decolonization struggle? From demands to decolonize education to the call to decolonize Bristol, the grammar of decolonization has appeared in various manifestations in each campaign. Decolonization involves not only physical and administrative freedom from European empires but also epistemic decolonization: delinking from Eurocentric ways of knowing and thinking. While physical decolonization was accomplished long ago, debate continues as to the meaning of decolonization and how it can be achieved. By means of their inclusion of a range of demands for decolonization, do Fallist movements represent the latest expression of this historical debate? What are the links between Fallism and historic calls for decolonization, and to what extent do they reflect a new vision for decolonization going forward? There is also a need for a closer examination of Fallist strategies and demands. For example, what does the decolonization of education and knowledge entail? How can one decolonize an urban sphere such as Bristol? How can the removal of monuments accomplish decolonization? What implications do these symbols have for the agendas and trajectories of these struggles?

While colonization as physical domination and exploitation by the European empires has ended, coloniality continues to exist as a mode of domination (Maldonado-Torres, 2016; Quijano, 2010). Coloniality, which, according to Mignolo, is itself “a decolonial concept” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 111), is based on the myth of modernity. This myth allowed European powers to cast themselves as superior and to enact violence in the name of modernity while negating and subordinating other ways of living, being, and knowing (Dussel, 2000; Walsh, 2010). The first mode of coloniality is *coloniality of power*, which used race categories to dominate colonized subjects and served as an initial mechanism for Eurocentrification (Quijano, 2010). All five campaigns have articulated this mode of domination by highlighting issues of racial exclusion and subordination within their vernacular settings.

The second mode of coloniality, which emanates from coloniality of power, is *coloniality of being*, which relates to the effects of colonialism on lived experience (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). Fanon’s articulation of the *Damnés*, their alienation and otherness as a mode of existence, represents the notion of coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Since 2013, the BLM movement has also articulated a mode of coloniality of being, underscoring how “Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise” (Garza, 2014). The wave of removals of monuments ignited by George Floyd’s death and his plea, “I can’t breathe,” demonstrates how Fallist movements attribute meanings of coloniality of being to icons of White supremacy such as statues of Rhodes, Colston, and Lee.

The third mode of coloniality, derived from the first two, is *coloniality of knowledge*, which uses Eurocentric ways of knowing and knowledge production as a tool of oppression to dismiss and subordinate other ways of knowing (Quijano, 2010). Edward Said (1978) demonstrates how Eurocentric knowledge production on and of the Orient was used to gain authority over it, and Gayatri Spivak (1993) argues that Subaltern Studies reproduce epistemic violence that allows the continued domination and subjugation of the West over people who are seemingly no longer colonized. By exposing the power of Western knowledge production, Said and Spivak leave us with questions regarding the possibility of decolonizing knowledge production and how we can delink it from imperial/modern knowledge (Mignolo, 2009).

For Fanon (1963), decolonization must start with decolonizing the mind, a moment of awakening that is a prerequisite in the fight against any mode of coloniality. Ngũgĩ (1986) maintains that decolonizing the mind is one of the initial stages of decolonization and is closely linked to the use of African languages. According to Ngũgĩ, the colonizers’ establishment of English as superior to local languages created a detachment from African vernacular culture. In this context, the use of African languages in schools and universities becomes a form of resistance to Europe’s epistemic authority and is a first step in reclaiming that authority. Wendy Makoons Geniusz (2009) suggests that reclaiming indigenous knowledge by correcting and restoring it is another way to decolonize knowledge. Moreover, non-Western knowledge should also be produced, evaluated, and studied within the framework of its aesthetics, methodologies, theories, and concepts (Ngũgĩ, 2018; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Other thinkers have claimed that decolonization is not just a matter of consciousness but also requires a reordering of the physical spaces that reproduce colonial hierarchies of knowledge and power (Bhandar et al., 2008).

Evaluating knowledge within its particularity and challenging the notion that Western modes of thinking are universal creates what has been called border thinking (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Border thinking enables us to recognize various types of knowledge and think outside modernity’s hegemonic discourse by adopting plural epistemologies (Mignolo, 2010). It demands a process of delinkage from modern/colonial epistemology that Walter Mignolo (2009) defines as an act of epistemic disobedience.

According to Rashedur Chowdhury (2019) and A. Kayum Ahmed (2020), the RMF and RMFO movements employ epistemic disobedience by rejecting and challenging the colonial legacies of their universities. Moreover, by attaching their struggle to Black pain and criticizing how universities dehumanize Black bodies, they make Fallism a “decolonial option that emerges from the university’s margins” (Ahmed, 2019a). Ahmed’s arguments demonstrate how the call for decolonization of the university is intertwined in coloniality of power and coloniality of being. However, to better understand the RMF and RMFO campaigns, we also need to understand the meaning of their demands and how they can be achieved.

Calls to decolonize the university are not new. Negritude and the fight for Black Studies in the US were among initial efforts to undermine Eurocentric hegemonic discourse in the academy and in society (Pimblott, 2020). During the 1990s, there was also demand in Latin America to incorporate indigenous knowledge in universities, which resulted in the creation of various indigenous universities in Bolivia, Peru, and Brazil (Icaza & Vázquez, 2018). The main demands of recent movements, such as RMFO’s Why Is My Curriculum White? at University College London and the Decolonize SOAS campaign, have focused on decolonizing the curriculum by adding a non-Western perspective. RMF, followed by the FMF campaign, have focused on a more Afrocentric curriculum, accessibility to quality education, and ending the outsourcing of employment in universities across South Africa (Desai, 2018).

Accordingly, the debate surrounding the movement for the decolonization of the university highlights how demands to decolonize and diversify within higher education are often intertwined with a rejection of neoliberal policy (Heleta, 2016; Mbembe, 2015, 2016; Gibson, 2017; Icaza & Vázquez, 2018; Griffiths, 2019; Grange et al., 2020). Nigel Gibson (2017) argues that the RMF/FMF movements represent a Fanonian moment, that is, a moment of rejection of the neocolonial setting in which South African universities operate. However, France Nkokomane Ntloedibe (2019) rejects Gibson’s definition, arguing that since the RMF/FMF have generally reframed their demands around a more Afrocentric curriculum, their protests have ended up being about transformation rather than decolonization, and do not fully reject Western epistemology. Moreover, Dominic Griffiths (2019) maintains that focusing on accessibility and lower tuition fees narrows the idea of decolonization to a neoliberal issue rather than an epistemic one. Both arguments exemplify criticisms of using decolonization to address various social issues rather than as a liberation project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni in Omanga, 2019; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Nonetheless, some researchers are not willing to settle for diversity and accessibility to education, preferring to question the whole possibility of decolonization within the university’s present structure. Achille Mbembe (2015, 2016) rejects Afrocentricity as a decolonizing term on the grounds that it limits the idea of epistemic plurality. He also questions the possibility of plurality within a globalized neoliberal system in which knowledge is considered a commodity. Erica Burman (2012) also questions the idea of delinking, arguing that when we integrate alternative perspectives on knowledge into the university, we confine them within the university’s current structure; the result is a reproduction of coloniality of knowledge. Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2004) further assert that the university cannot be a place of enlightenment or refuge from coloniality; we cannot expect the university to provide us with a decolonized space where “one can only sneak into the university and steal what one can” (p. 101).

These arguments underscore the ambiguities and difficulties with achieving decolonization in postcolonial spaces. Is Fallism another stage on the historic continuum of demands for decolonization that will ultimately fail to provide a complete way out of colonial ways of knowing? Does it represent a new articulation and new possibilities for delinking, or an easy target that may end up perpetuating coloniality? Dalia Gebrial (2018) emphasizes that the RMF movement must be thought of in terms that go beyond the university setting, using a decolonial framework. As demonstrated above, each of these movements expresses a different mode of decolonial struggle that extends it to cover more than questions of knowledge production. Mignolo notes that decoloniality is not a constant term and is defined differently in each vernacular setting (cited on Theory from the Margins, 2020). His argument raises a number of questions regarding the various aspects of the demand for decolonization. In what terms does each movement define its decolonial struggle? How does iconoclasm articulate the different modes of coloniality? Do Fallist movements focus on the removal of monuments as a goal that, unlike decolonization, is clear achievable? How is decolonization to be understood once the statues are gone? By analyzing and comparing each case, we will better understand the tensions and difficulties that come with the demand for decolonization.

## ***2.2. Fallism as Social Movement Diffusion Process***

While decoloniality may be a useful framework for the five case studies, it does not explain why some movements, such as CRFP, have chosen to use the RMF slogan despite its focus on the Columbus statue. Nor does it explain why the different campaigns have centered their efforts on the removal of statues even though their demands extend beyond that. Social movement diffusion theory may explain the adaptation by the various movements of particular slogans, demands, tactics, and even frameworks.

Research on the diffusion of ideas encompasses various disciplines. It has focused on the different ways in which communication of innovation works, while revealing social processes and structures that may motivate or hinder diffusion (Rogers, 1995). Diffusion is also at the heart of social movements research, with many scholars exploring different aspects of these processes (Benford & Snow, 2000; della Porta & Mattoni, 2014; Kolins et al., 2010; McAdam & Rucht, 1993; Romanos, 2020; Soule, 1997; Tarrow, 2005). One strand of the social movements diffusion literature has emphasized the different routes and directions of diffusion, and how protests evolve. Another strand has focused on how diffusion occurs: its enabling mechanisms, network conditions, and characteristics. Finally, social movements researchers have also examined what is (and what is not) being diffused, the claims, targets, solutions, tactics, or contentious repertoires and performances that movements borrow from one another, and how and why they alter them (Tilly 2008; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015).

Sidney Tarrow (2005, 2010) distinguishes between two types of social movements diffusion, horizontal and vertical. Horizontal diffusion is the spread of collective action within specific political and national contexts to other sites, national or transnational; examples include the spread of sit-ins as part of the civil rights movement campaign in the Southern US during the 1960s and the Arab Spring protests of 2011. Vertical diffusion, or scale shift, moves upwards from a local municipal setting to a national or global level (Tarrow, 2005). Fallist movements have displayed various directions of diffusion as they change from local to global phenomena. Questions remain as to which types of diffusion we can identify within Fallism and which mechanisms advance its diffusion in a specific direction.

Accordingly, many studies have examined the mechanisms that allow local and transnational diffusion to occur (Chabot, 2010; Koinova & Dženeta, 2017; McAdam & Rucht, 1993; Romanos, 2020; Soule, 1997; Tarrow, 2005, 2010; Vasi, 2011). Doug McAdam and Dieter Rucht (1993) described two main mechanisms: relational diffusion, which includes direct ties or communication channels between initiators and spin-off movements (McAdam, 1995), and nonrelational diffusion, which includes indirect communication via mass media (McAdam & Rucht, 1993) and, more recently, via the Internet and social media (Vasi & Chan, 2013). This type of mechanism informs other activists locally or globally and elicits political agency. Tarrow (2005) recognizes another mechanism, mediated diffusion, which takes place through brokerages that link two or more movements. Brokers can speed up the diffusion process, bridge socio-cultural differences by acting as translators, and influence the way movements organize (Marry, 2006; Romanos, 2016, 2020; Tarrow, 2005).

Each mechanism or communication channel has a different influence on the diffusion process (Tarrow, 2005). Eduardo Romanos (2020) highlights the different factors involved in nonrelational and mediated diffusion during the global protests cycles in 2011. He argues that, although social media elicited political agency and inspired the formation of other movements, it was Spanish immigrants to the US who did most to shape the organizational structure of the Occupy protests, modeling them after the Spanish Indignados protests. Maria Koinova and Dženeta Karabegović (2017) also emphasized the role of immigrants as transnational brokers, who, by identifying political opportunities in their host countries, can influence the spread of claims from the local to the global level. However, diffusion is not a straightforward process, as it also involves more nuanced multidirectional communications. Therefore, we need analytical tools capable of going beyond the depiction of diffusion as a linear process.

In this connection, Sean Chabot (2010) suggests that we focus on dialog between social movements and its influence on transnational diffusion. Chabot argues that social movements will adapt unfamiliar contentious repertoires when they engage in dialog and develop relationships with initiator movements. In the case of the nonviolent tactics that the civil rights movement adapted from the Gandhian repertoire, direct dialog between movements enabled US activists to translate those methods into a form appropriate to their struggle. Dialog also allows activists to experiment with and integrate borrowed tactics into their unique setting (Chabot, 2010). Focusing on dialog and the distinctions between different routes of communication is essential to understanding diffusion among Fallist movements, helping us to understand the connections between the movements and to identify the different outcomes of each communication channel on local campaigns.

Expanding on the work of Chabot and Romanos, Cecelia Walsh-Russo (2017) introduces the notion of mutual brokerages and considers their role in the transnational exchange of ideas and tactics between British and American female abolitionists during the nineteenth century. Walsh-Russo maintains that textual exchanges and debates between women in the two movements led to multidirectional diffusion, and that this led to the creation of new and contentious repertoires. The idea of mutual brokerages allows us to move away from viewing diffusion as a linear process and to explore it as a multidirectional one. On this approach, we can ask what types of dialog Fallist movements develop with each other, how the directions in which Fallism has traveled (e.g. Global South to North, and vice versa) shaped these dialogs, and whether Fallists view their struggle as unique to their circumstances or as part of an interconnected global effort.

Social movements scholars have also investigated different aspects of diffusion mechanisms in an attempt to identify organizational characters, social relations, social identity, and various communications that will help to explain and assess why diffusion happens and what and how is being diffused (Andrew & Biggs, 2006; Meyer & Whittier, 1994; Soule, 1997, 1999; Vasi, 2011; Vasi & Chan, 2013; Wang et al., 2019). Kenneth Andrews and Michael Biggs (2006) found that social organizations and the local press significantly influenced the dissemination patterns of sit-ins in the Southern US during the 1950s and 60s, while David Meyer and Nancy Whittier (1994) highlighted the vital influence of community and veteran activists on second-generation movements. Moreover, diffusion of innovative tactics can take place even if these tactics were initially unsuccessful (Soule, 1999); activists will adapt failed tactics if they are socially constructed as successful by the press and other activists, or if they are in line with the adapters’ perceptions of what is appropriate for the situation.

The above arguments lead us to another aspect of social movements diffusion that focuses on the diffused elements and the differences between innovators and adapters. According to Conny Roggeband (2004, 2010), claims may be translated, reinterpreted, and recontextualized because of political and institutional differences; responses to a claim, whether from the media, formal institutions, or the general public, may alter the framing of a social movements. Different framings of similar issues are an integral part of the diffusion process of social movements. Framings are affected by political structures and opportunities, by cultural differences and constraints, and by the audience who responds to the claims (e.g. the mass media, politicians, or decision-makers) (Benford & Snow, 1999, 2000).

Identifying differences and similarities between different Fallist movements in terms of tactics, framings, and ideologies can help us to expose the local meanings and challenges in each case. It will also clarify the politics of the diffusion process in terms of the reasons activists have for choosing to adopt, adapt, or reject particular claims and tactics, as well as how diffused claims or tactics contribute to the mobilization of the movements and the dialogical and negotiation processes that activists use when they decide to adopt claims or repertoires from elsewhere. Exploring Fallism as part of a diffusion process will shed light on how it has become a global phenomenon. No adequate explanation of this issue can neglect the use of social media as a mobilizing tool.

### ***2.2.1. Social Media in the Mobilization and Diffusion of Social Movements***

Any research involving twenty-first-century social movements must understand the role of social media in their evolution and diffusion. Over the last two decades, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have become an essential tool for activists, allowing them to mobilize, organize, gain visibility, and promote their messages locally and globally (LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2016; Neumayer & Rossi, 2018; Penney & Dadas, 2014; Rane & Salem, 2012). Social media affect how contentious events are perceived, both by those who participate in them and by others who watch from a distance (Papacharissi & de Fatima Oliveira, 2012). Since the global wave of protests in 2011, there has been wide-ranging debate among scholars exploring the roles of social media in contentious events. Some maintain that social media networks allow social movements to win greater exposure and enable everyday citizens to counter the narratives presented in the mainstream media (LeFebvre & Armstrong, 2018; Neumayer & Rossi, 2018).

Researchers have also examined how social movements use social media to promote their messages, especially in relation to what types of content (e.g. texts, images, and links to websites) are effective in gaining attention and eliciting political agency (Casas & Williams, 2019; Pang & Law, 2017; Penney & Dadas, 2014). For example, Natalie Pang and Pei Wen Law (2017) observed that tweets on Twitter that included links to other websites were more likely to be retweeted than those that include hashtags. Christina Neumayer and Luca Rossi (2018) found that tweeting images during protests allowed protesters to create their own visual narrative and to balance it against that of the mainstream media and the police. Andreu Casas and Nora Webb Williams (2019) noted that tweets that include images are more likely to be retweeted by users of social media who usually do not tweet about protests. These findings demonstrate how images play an essential part in mobilization and can help us understand the instrumental role of dramatic images, such as the toppling of the Rhodes statue at UCT, as a mobilizing tool and as a transnational diffusion mechanism.

Another essential tool for activists is the hashtag symbol (#), traditionally used for indexing, which has become a rhetorical and performative tool, especially on Twitter (Bonila & Rosa, 2015; Daer et al., 2014). Hashtags are used to highlight, critique, identify, and bring awareness to an issue or campaign, as well as to focus on an online conversation around a specific topic (Daer et al., 2014; Lim, 2018). Although hashtags may distort a conversation by muting other voices (Bonila & Rosa, 2015), they can enable the recontextualization of local events as manifestations of global issues. In the protests against police violence in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, the use of hashtags such as #Egypt, #Palestine, and #Turkey along with the Ferguson hashtags provided a broader view of the issue of state-sponsored violence.

Hashtags as a recontextualization tool are particularly important for Fallist movements. While different campaigns may emphasize the locality of their issues, the use of similar hashtags (such as #mustfall) on social platforms creates global connections with their vernacular grievances. Social media can act as a router that links various social networks, and hashtags are a part of the toolkit for connecting social movements locally and globally (Lim, 2018). However, while acknowledging that hashtags have a globalizing quality, we must pay attention to the politics behind them and how movements may reclaim and reframe the local issues of another movement as their own (Adesanmi, 2018). Close analysis of the politics behind hashtags used by Fallist movements will enrich our understanding of the role of social media in the diffusion process.

The globalizing character of social media is paramount in social movements diffusion, as they serve as tools for communication, dissemination of information, and mobilization (Gerbaudo, 2012; Theocharis et al., 2015). However, the contribution of social media to social changes has been criticized for its limited ability to mobilize people beyond the virtual sphere (Gladwel, 2010). While some scholars acknowledge limitations to the capacity of social media to produce change in the absence of grassroots activism or personal connections between different organizations (Cabrera et al., 2017; Gerbaudo, 2012; Vasi & Chan, 2013), others argue that social media elicit political agency (Theocharis et al., 2015) and contribute to more participatory citizenship (Daniels, 2016).

Within Fallist movements, social media have been an essential tool, especially in the RMF/FMF campaigns. Tanja Bosch (2016, 2017) argues that, during the RMF protests, Twitter became a significant space where young people could engage politically. While Fallist movements have used social media in a range of ways, we must acknowledge that social media are not only a mechanism for diffusion or mobilization but also a sphere in which activists can define their goals and agendas, engage and connect, and create their vernacular and global narratives. These considerations raise the question of how communication through social media shapes the agendas of the Fallist movements. For example, does a “must fall” message accompanied by a visual image travel more efficiently via social media than a more complex demand (e.g. a call for decolonization of the university)? Furthermore, what types of connections do social media provide between the various movements?

## ***2.3. Fallism as Twenty-First-Century Pan-African Movement***

Although diffusion may explain why and how Fallism has spread across the world, Fallism can also be understood as part of a long tradition of Pan-African struggles and movements that highlight the connection between Africa and its diaspora. While Pan-Africanism has multiple meanings, most scholars regard it as a set of social, political, and cultural phenomena concerning Africa and its diaspora (Adi, 2018; Adi & Sherwood, 2003; Esedebe, 1994; Kasanda, 2016; Malisa & Nhengeze; Walters, 1993; Warren, 1990; Young, 2010). Reiland Rabaka (2020) further suggests that Pan-Africanism should be seen in terms of Pan-Africanisms, that is, as a plurality of ideas and movements that are in constant dialog and that contain contradictory ideologies regarding Africa and its diaspora. It seems that, in its essence, Pan-Africanism consists in connection and solidarity between Africa and its diaspora and the aspiration for unity between the two, whether politically, culturally, consciously, or physically (Adi, 2018; Beamon, 2012; Falola & Essien, 2014; Kasanda, 2016; Walters, 1993).

Pan-Africanism is connected to the history of the slave trade, colonialism, and encounters between the West and Africa. As far back as the eighteenth-century movement calling for emigration to Africa and the abolitionist movements expressing different modes of resistance to White supremacy, Pan-Africanism has found articulation (Adi 2018; Esedebe 1994) One of its most prominent early expressions as a movement was Martin Delany and Edward Blyden’s migration to Liberia. Blyden called for the unification of all African people as part of the fight against their oppression and dehumanization (Adi, 2018; Adi & Sherwood, 2003; Kasanda, 2016). Blyden was the first to articulate the idea of the African Personality, a core element in Pan-African consciousness shared by many Africans across the globe. However, this movement was criticized for implementing Western values by building a community in Africa that adhered to Western ideals of modernity (Schramm, 2010).

As a distinct movement, Pan-Africanism began in 1900 with the convening of the first Pan-African Conference[[3]](#footnote-3) in London, which dealt with the conditions of African people outside Africa, colonialism, and other forms of oppression (Adi, 2018; Andrews, 2017; Fergus, 2010; Legum, 1965; Nantambu, 1998; Tunde, 1998). The Conference called for closer connections between peoples of African descent throughout the world and gave rise to two distinct Pan-African ideas and movements: WEB Du Bois’s political-intellectual Pan-Africanism, and Marcus Garvey’s Back to Africa nationalist movement, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) (Fergus, 2010).

The UNIA was a mass movement identified primarily with the notions of Back to Africa, race-based solidarity, and African unity (Adi, 2018; Kasanda, 2016). Garvey believed in Black liberation through the liberation of Africa from colonialism, and he aspired to the emancipation of the Black race through separation. His uplifting Black nationalist philosophy appealed to the masses outside Africa, and his legacy inspired other Black radical movements, including Malcolm X’s Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) and the Black Power movements (Andrews, 2017, 2018; Kasanda, 2016). Unlike Garvey’s, Du Bois’s Pan-Africanism was part of a middle-class Anglo-American intellectual movement that sought to improve the conditions of Black people in the diaspora, advocated equality, and promoted self-determination in Africa (Adi, 2018; Malisa & Quardey Missedja, 2020; Nantambu, 1998). Du Bois and others strived for Africa to be liberated and led by those who had been educated in the West (Andrews, 2017; Malisa & Quardey Missedja, 2020).

Du Bois’s most significant contribution to the Pan-African movements was the organization of the first four Pan-African congresses held in various locations across Europe and New York between 1919 to 1927 (Adi, 2018). All four congresses were heavily influenced by Anglo-American views and dominated by Blacks from the diaspora (Malisa & Nhengeze, 2018). They revolved around the need for laws against exploitation of the land, the oppression of natives in Africa and the colonies, equality, and African self-government (Adi, 2018; Legum, 1965; Malisa & Quardey Missedja, 2020).

Kehinde Andrews (2017, 2018) argues that Du Bois’s Pan-Africanism and liberal thought did not sufficiently challenge Western imperialism and contented itself with seeking equality through reform; most importantly, it came to accept the notion of the colonial nation-state. On the other hand, radical movements such as the UNIA and, particularly, the OAAU understood that Black people could not achieve racial justice through reforms but only by completely overturning the imperial order. Andrews’s critique of Du Bois highlights the tensions between the reforming and reordering aspects of Pan-Africanism, and provides insight into Fallist movements and their relations with different Pan-African articulations.

The Fifth Pan-African Congress, held in Manchester in 1945, marked a new phase in Pan-Africanism as an anti-colonial movement, with a shift in focus from the African diaspora to the African continent (Adi, 2018). Most of the congress’s representatives and organizers were from Africa (Kasanda, 2016), and the program focused on the independence of African colonies which would eventually lead to African unity (Adi, 2018; Kasanda, 2016). However, the idea of unity did not appeal to all African states and colonies, and the formation in 1963 of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was the result. The OAU symbolized the abandonment of the utopian ideal of the African nation and an acceptance of European imperialism’s national borders.

This shift in Pan-Africanism toward anti-colonial struggle was influential on the Pan-African movement in the diaspora, especially the Black Power movement (Adi, 2018). After his departure from the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X turned to Africa as a source of unity, empowerment, and support for equality in the US (Haley & Malcolm X, 1964). The African anti-colonial struggle also influenced other Black Power organizations, including the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Black Panther Party. Decolonization became integral to the agendas and activities of these movements, which supported various anti-colonial struggles across the African continent (Walters, 1993).

A further shift in Pan-Africanism in the US diaspora during the 1960s and 70s was the revival of cultural Pan-Africanism (Warren, 1990). Influenced by anti-colonial struggles, Africa became philosophically and artistically a symbol of liberation. Led by Imamu Amiri Baraka and Maulana Karenga, the US art movement focused on creating a Black identity and consciousness and adopted Black Nationalist ideas. It also contributed to the notion of shared African identity and Afrocentricity (Adi, 2018; Warren, 1990). However, some critics have noted that the notion of shared identity ignores the reality of ethnic and cultural differences between Africa and the West (Tunde, 1998).

The critique of shared identity is important, as it raises the question of whether Fallism can become a global movement that shares and articulates its struggle as part of a Pan-African project that builds on mutual relations and connections. While some movements, such as RMFO and CRFP, relate to the RMF struggle as a source of inspiration – indeed, all these movements have expressed on social media their solidarity with one another – does Fallism and its direction of travel provide a new articulation of Pan-Africanism? What are the explicit and implicit resonances of Pan-Africanism in Fallism, and how do the different campaigns use it as a mobilization tool?

The launch of the African Union (AU) in 2002 in Durban, South Africa elicited new articulations of Pan-Africanism. The formation of the AU was a response to new challenges introduced by globalization (Adi, 2018). One of the steps initiated by the organization in order to connect between Africa and its diaspora was the inclusion of the African Diaspora as the sixth region of Africa (Fergus, 2010; Odamtten, 2014). This allowed the AU to reappropriate and redesign the idea of Pan-Africanism by constructing a new, universal African identity (Beamon, 2012). However, this idea limits the notion of African identity to being part of an institutional reform of connections between civil society (Okhonmina, 2009). If we accept Roland Walters’s (1993) view that Pan-Africanism is a dynamic between Africa and its diaspora, then the issue of civil society becomes crucial for understanding the current phase of Pan-Africanism. This approach may also shed light on the connections that Fallism articulates between different African communities through their iconoclastic struggles against White supremacy.

Roland Mireku Yeboah (2018) argues that the diaspora’s inclusion as a region of Africa should also come with a commitment to solidarity with the diaspora and greater support for racial struggles such as the BLM movement. However, Krystal Strong (2018) notes that the lack of solidarity from Blacks in the US toward African struggles such as the FMF movement and Occupy Nigeria in 2012 raises serious questions about the commitment of the American diaspora, and of the BLM movement in particular, to the protection of all Black lives. The question is whether the Fallist movements embrace these types of commitments and whether there is something inherently Pan-Africanist in them that goes beyond mere influence.

Social media is another factor that has contributed to greater connections among Africans in recent years, creating what Siyanda Mohutsiwa (2016) calls Social Pan-Africanism. Mohutsiwa argues that social networks allow young Africans to exchange ideas and have become a source of African unity. Similarly, Amira Rasool (2019) argues that Twitter is a space where young people can create new Pan-African knowledge and social activity. As noted above, the RMF/FMF campaigns on Twitter inspired the creation of other movements, demonstrating how African people worldwide can unite via social media. Mohutsiwa and Rasool’s work highlights how new technologies provide a way for Africa and its diaspora to connect through the Internet and by using a shared vocabulary, replacing previous connections made through shipping routes (Gilroy, 2016). Nevertheless, it remains to be established whether these new connections provide an opportunity for a new articulation of Pan-Africanism or whether new technologies are being used to reiterate existing notions.

## ***2.4. Challenging White Supremacy through Commemoration***

The review above explores ways in which Fallism can be understood as an interrelated phenomenon. Another aspect of Fallism that is central to the five case studies touches upon a broader conversation regarding the role and meaning of commemoration as part of the agendas and tactics of these movements. Gillis (1994) argues that memory and identity are co-dependent; while they may seem to be constants, they are continually changing and being challenged. Commemoration represents our ever-changing reality and, in some cases, is used to highlight differences between past and present. As an integral part of the construction of national identity, collective memory often becomes a battleground around questions regarding who should be commemorated, how, and where. The dynamic nature of commemoration can be seen in the democratization of memory, as more people create their own ways of preserving it, making commemoration more inclusive and mundane instead of something that is part of a national project. As a result, commemoration has become more open to political struggle (Gillis, 1994).

The dynamic character of commemoration is also reflected in what Caroline Winter has called generations of memory (Winter, 2006). Winter argues that we can trace shifts in commemoration practices in memory cycles that reflect social, economic, and political changes, from the ubiquitous First World War memorials to the narrative shift that has highlighted survivors of the Holocaust. Transitions in commemoration, whether in their location, design, or object of commemoration, express the struggles of the variant meanings of collective memory and commemoration (Winter, 2006). These struggles often take place during the creation of what Pier Nora (1989) calls *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory). The political struggle involved in collective memory is even more noticeable in ethnically divided societies, since it is almost impossible to maintain multiple narratives without conflict (Bruggemann & Kasekamp, 2008).

Commemorative practices can become internationalized. Louis Bickford and Amy Sodaro (2010) demonstrate how the internationalization of Holocaust commemoration turned into a new commemoration norm of “never again.” Johanna Mannergren Selimovic (2013) demonstrates how using the norms of international commemoration to commemorate genocide has produced different outcomes; in some cases commemoration norms have facilitated the political agency of survivors, while in other cases they have subdued alternative narratives of memory for the sake of national unity. While commemoration may become a site of consensus, it can also become a site of political conflict. The demand that Confederate monuments in the Southern US be removed provides an example where such demands evoke conflict regarding historical narratives, heritage, and identity (de Velasco, 2019; Hahn, 2018). Commemoration as a site for political struggle is found in all five of the case studies here. However, we need to understand the politics behind these conflicts, how Fallists movements respond to counterclaims, and how they use memory as a resistance tool.

Fallist movements’ demands that historical narratives be corrected by the removal of certain monuments indicates how counter-interpretation to the collective memory of slavery and colonialism can provide a way for memory to become a resistance tool (Ryan, 2010). Another method of commemorative resistance is the creation of counter-monuments (Becker, 2019). In New Orleans, for example, Black residents have created counter-monuments[[4]](#footnote-4) to defy the history of the Confederacy. In deeply divided societies, the creation of alternative and multiple narratives as a means of resistance can also be a reparative tool. Through the acknowledgment of other memory narratives, commemoration can become a symbolic reparation or a gesture of compensation (Brown, 2013; Marschall, 2004). This process highlights how commemoration as a political demand can be a starting point for reparation for colonialism and slavery.

Commemoration, as symbolic reparation and a healing process, is one way in which postcolonial nations seek to deal with the aftermath of colonization. Post-apartheid South Africa adopted a multiplicative approach to commemoration by adding commemorative objects intended for Black Africans. Those objects often highlight resistance and triumph, and they may function as symbolic reparation (Marschall, 2004). However, Carolyn Holmes and Melanie Loehwing (2016) argue that the RMF protests demonstrate how attempts to maintain multiple commemorative objects have failed; by essentially rejecting symbolic reparation and demanding transformation within academia, the protesters underscore the failure of the South African transition to multiracial democracy.

Another way to overcome the colonial past is through a contradictory aesthetic. In Namibia, governments have installed North-Korean designed monuments in a grandiose Stalinist style that distinguishes them from colonial monuments (Becker, 2018). Other countries, including Zimbabwe, have used the renaming of streets, schools, and public places to create a postcolonial national identity (Mangena, 2020; Nyambi & Mangena, 2016). This process is ongoing and reflects contemporary political struggles. However, it is not the renaming itself that lies at the heart of the struggle but the question of who initiates it and why. Tendai Mangena (2020) demonstrates how the removal of Cecil Rhodes’s name from a school in Matobo, Zimbabwe as a part of the birthday celebrations for President Mugabe has been criticized as a distraction from the real issues that burden the country, such as rising unemployment. This criticism highlights the dilemma integral to the demand to remove monuments. Toppling statues is a familiar practice that symbolizes phases of political transition and dissent and can constitute a first step in healing. Ultimately, however, it may distract from the underlying issues of coloniality in everyday life.

## ***2.5. Current Research on Fallism***

To date, most research on Fallism has focused on the RMF/FMF movements in South Africa. Some researchers view the movements as part of a new wave of student protests in the country (Luescher et al., 2017; Luescher & Klemenčič, 2017). Some have focused on the extensive use of social media during the protests as a mobilizing tool that allows students to be politically engaged, and as a sphere that enables meaningful dialog about racial exclusion (Bosch, 2016, 2017). Others have tried to locate the various grievances raised by the protests (Naidoo, 2016; Nyamnjoh, 2016), explaining the RMF/FMF movements in terms of a reaction to globalization and the neoliberal economy of the Born Free generation (Garton, 2019; Khwezi, 2017).

Much of the literature on the RMF/FMF movements has engaged with the movements’ demand for decolonization of the university and the idea of disruption/rejection as a form of decolonial struggle (Chowdhury, 2019; Mpofu, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020; Taghavi, 2017). While some see the protests as a moment in which there is potential for changes in power relations (Gibson, 2017), others have argued that the protests have ended up being about reform and the rejection of the neoliberalization of South African higher education rather than the articulation of a revolutionary moment (Griffiths, 2019; Ntloedibe, 2019). Ahmed’s important recent study attempts to understand the connections between the RMF and the RMFO movements through the meaning of Fallism (Ahmed, 2019b). Arguing that Fallism is a variegated concept with a range of meanings, Ahmed connects the movements through their displays of epistemic disobedience, raising the possibility of decoloniality. He argues that the connections between RMF and RMFO may be understood as a manifestation of Jean and John Comaroff’s (2012) theory from the South, in which the South exports changes and ideas to the North and the margins become the core. While Ahmed’s study is vital in establishing the notion of decoloniality in relation to Fallist movements, it is limited to one aspect of Fallism within academic institutions.

Unlike the RMF and FMF movements, research on the other four case studies has been minimal. The literature regarding RMFO focuses on Rhodes’s legacy as a justification for his statue’s removal (Newsinger, 2016; Shilliam, 2019). Other academic work has concentrated on the experiences of students and faculty within the movement (Chantiluke et al., 2018; Chigudu, 2020). Although there have been a number of studies on various struggles concerning Confederate monuments, most of them focus on the commemorative aspect, that is, on the legacy and the creation of southern identity through the Lost Cause narrative (Beetham, 2016; de Velasco, 2019; Grobler, 2006). So far, research in relation to TEDN has centered on the rhetoric of the justification of statue removals (Grossman, forthcoming) and the history of the struggle for monument removals in New Orleans (Mitchell, 2020). Currently, there is no academic literature on the CC and CRFP campaigns; however, a small number of studies have confronted the commemorative aspect of slavery in Bristol (Dresser, 2009; Otele, 2012). Therefore, the proposed study aims to explore Fallism as a global phenomenon. Comparison between the five case studies will enable us to reevaluate and shed new light on previous studies that focus on Fallism in South Africa and to provide a new transnational perspective on Fallism.

# **3. Research Questions, Methodology, and Research Contribution**

## ***3.1. Research Questions***

The proposed research aims to explore Fallism as both a deeply local and an interrelated global phenomenon, thereby expanding significantly on previous studies, which focus on Fallism within university settings. By examining the five case studies presented above, the study will explore the tactical, ideological, and symbolic evolution of each of the movements, as well as the relations between them. In addition, it will analyze and compare how each of the movements understands the aftermath of statue removals and its impact on their goals, and how their successes and failures affect other movements.

In the context of the four analytical frameworks presented above, the questions that motivate the proposed research are as follows. (1) How do Fallist movements embody the possibilities and limitations for decoloniality? (2) Does Fallism reflect a transnational diffusion process, or is it an inherently Pan-Africanist struggle retracing the historical circuits of knowledge and solidarity? (3) How do activists engage with the global circuits of Fallism, and how do they integrate these into their local reasoning? (4) What is the significance of commemoration for Fallist movements, and what are the cultural and political meanings that activists attribute to their demand for the removal of statues? (5) Finally, what can Fallism teach us about broader struggles against racism and White supremacy, particularly in the era of neoliberalism and identity politics?

## ***3.2. Methodology and Research Contribution***

In order to answer the above questions, this research will be conducted in two stages. The first stage will take the form of textual analysis to generate rich insights into the ideas being articulated by the various campaigns. The first set of data will consist of social media posts by each movement on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube channels. As noted in the literature review, social media have become an essential tool for movements in terms of organizing, mobilizing, and acting as a diffusion mechanism; thus, they provide an essential context for the analysis of how social movements operate. With the exception of CRFP, which maintains only a Facebook account, all the movements have both Facebook accounts and Twitter accounts containing between 1,500 and 3,500 tweets. The goal of the proposed study is to analyze between 500 and 600 tweets from each Twitter account and around 500 Facebook posts, totaling a minimum of 5,000 posts and tweets. The tweets/posts from each social media account will be archived chronologically in Wakelet, a web platform that allows online content to be curated and exported to PDF format.

The second set of data will be collected from the movements’ websites,[[5]](#footnote-5) press releases, position papers, opinion pieces published by different activists, and any other written and visual materials published by the different campaigns. The proposed study will also analyze responses given by universities, mayors, and other state officials, including three books published by a former mayor of New Orleans, Mitch Landrieu, the outgoing Vice-Chancellor of Wits University, Adam Habib, and a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State, Jonathan Jansen.

Another set of data will include mainstream media reports from local and national media regarding each case study. Reviewing such reports will enrich our understanding of public and media opinion toward the movements and of how each campaign has responded to these views. The media sources that will be reviewed cover South Africa (the *Independent Online* [IOL], which contains reports from 12 newspapers, some of them local to the Western Cape area, the *Mail & Guardian*, *Daily Vox*, *News24*, and the *Daily Maverick*), the UK (national media such as the *Guardian*, *BBC News*, the *Independent*, and the *Daily Telegraph*, and local news sources such as the *Oxford Mail* and *Bristol Live*), the US (national media such as the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and the *New York Times*, and local New Orleans news website NOLA.COM), and TT (the *TT Guardian*, *TT Newsday*, and *Loop News TT*). These media outlets have been selected for their potential to provide an panoramic view of the movements and a greater number of perspectives on the different campaigns.

This analysis will also serve as preparation for the second research stage, which includes fieldwork consisting of 55 semi-structured interviews: 15 interviews in Cape Town, South Africa (with former activists, UCT faculty, and current students), and 40 interviews in Oxford (with current and former activists and faculty members involved in the RMFO campaign) and in Bristol, New Orleans, and Port of Spain (with activists involved in the various campaigns). The number of interviews in each case study will vary according to the extent of the campaign’s activity, reflecting that fact that some campaigns are more prominent than others. Interviewees will be contacted through social media and emails, and snowball sampling will be used to reach more informants.

The data will be analyzed according to a thematic discourse analysis approach (Taylor & Ussher, 2001) using Atlas.it software for the analysis of qualitative data. Thematic discourse analysis is a method of identifying and analyzing themes and repeated patterns while clarifying the social meanings of speech and language (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It will allow the identification of different ways in which activists interpret, contextualize, and make sense of their ideologies, framing, and actions through their demands for the removal of monuments that represent colonialism and White supremacy.

This methodology will facilitate a nuanced perspective on how activists operate, understand, and articulate their activism, how different Fallist movements have evolved, and how Fallism can be understood as an interrelated phenomenon. The proposed study will thus provide a fresh outlook on Fallism that builds on the findings of previous studies. As well as drawing on the existing literature on decoloniality, social movements diffusion, Pan-Africanism, and commemoration, the study will address a gap in that literature by providing a new perspective on social struggles.

1. Fallism and Fallist are terms initially used by the Fees Must Fall activists in South Africa (Ahmed, 2019b) and later adopted in the academic literature. While the terms Fallism and Fallist carry various meanings beyond the physical act of statue removals, in this proposal I will use them as descriptive terms for the physical act of, or demand for, the removal of statues. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The decision to rename Colston Hall was taken in 2017. The official announcement that it would be renamed Beacon Hall was made in September 2020 following a three-year renovation project (Cork, 2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. There is debate as to whether the 1900 London conference should be considered separately from or as part of the Pan-African congresses initiated in 1919 by WEB Du Bois. In order to maintain coherence, I will observe a distinction between the two. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Counter-monuments are not necessarily statues and may take various forms (e.g. works of art, traditional clothing, and symbols). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Excluding the RMF/FMF movements, which have not operated a website. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)