



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Rehearsing Decolonial Curatorship of Southeast Asian Sound Archives in Europe

Yamomo, M.; Titus, B.

DOI

[10.1515/9789048556731-009](https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048556731-009)

[10.2307/jj.11895526.11](https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.11895526.11)

Publication date

2024

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

The Future of the Dutch Colonial Past

License

CC BY-NC-ND

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Yamomo, M., & Titus, B. (2024). Rehearsing Decolonial Curatorship of Southeast Asian Sound Archives in Europe. In E. van Bijnen, P. Brandon, K. Fatah-Black, I. Limon, W. Modest, & M. Schavemaker (Eds.), *The Future of the Dutch Colonial Past : Curating Heritage, Art and Activism* (pp. 110-125). Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048556731-009>, <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.11895526.11>

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (<https://dare.uva.nl>)

Rehearsing Decolonial Curatorship of Southeast Asian Sound Archives in Europe

BY MELÉ YAMOMO AND BARBARA TITUS



ABSTRACT: What are the critical implications of dialogic thinking and writing? Can we find clues in the collaborative possibilities of performance and musicking for sustaining such conversations? This chapter dissects and intensifies these questions through a dialogue between yamomo and Titus in outlining their respective positions in the gradual realization of their plans pertaining to Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives (DeCoSEAS, 2021-2024). Through the entanglements of our respective agencies in working on this project we reflect on existing constellations of power that also feature in our collaboration – with each other and with our Southeast Asian and European partners. Hence, we emphatically include ourselves in our critique of such power constellations. Our epistemic practices encompass performative, reflective, and artistic dimensions that we outline here in order to offer some suggestions for sustained decolonial practice in the arts and humanities.

W

hat are the critical implications of dialogic thinking and writing? Can we find clues in the collaborative possibilities of performance and musicking for sustaining such conversations? These were the questions that theater maker, composer, and sound historian melê yamomo posed to introduce his already long-standing collaboration with cultural musicologist Barbara Titus in a joint article entitled “The Persistent Refrain of the Colonial Archival Logic / Colonial Entanglements and Sonic Transgressions: Sounding Out the Jaap Kunst Collection”. The article was published in 2021 in a themed issue of *the world of music* on postcolonial sound archives (yamomo & Titus 2021). The present chapter further dissects and intensifies these questions through a more direct dialogue between yamomo and Titus in outlining their respective positions in the gradual realization of their plans pertaining to *Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives* (DeCoSEAS), a three-year research and community engagement project (2021–2024) funded by the Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) on Cultural Heritage and Global Change, supported by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program. Through the entanglements of our respective agencies in working on this project, we are able to reflect on existing constellations of power that also feature in our collaboration—with each other and with our Southeast Asian and European partners. Hence, we emphatically include ourselves in our critique of such power constellations. Our epistemic practices encompass performative, reflective, and artistic dimensions that we outline here in order to offer some suggestions for sustained decolonial practice in the arts and humanities.

BARBARA TITUS: The ideas generated by our joint DeCoSEAS project are the fruits of years of thinking that meLê has already been engaged with. meLê is much better versed in reflections on and the practice of decolonization than I am. Our respective positions in colonial and patriarchal constellations of power are different, although there are certain overlaps. Yet it is fair to say that I became aware of those positions and constellations only gradually, not only through my previous academic work in South Africa between 2008 and 2018 (Titus 2022) but also through my friendship and collaboration with meLê. Social dynamics and interactions that I had not previously experienced as meaningful started to shine through my privileges—a process that is ongoing as we speak. Our togetherness makes things surface that really impact on the kind of decolonization we try to realize. Other contributions in this volume outline how the (after)lives of colonialism in the present are perceivable in texts and images from buildings and landscapes, and even at sea (Stelder 2023). Here we state that these (after)lives are also present in sounds. Coloniality is not only physical and visible, but also audible. At the same time, meLê will demonstrate how sound can be a method of decolonization.

Our joint project bears the ambitious title *Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives*. How do you decolonize an archive? If you look at it straightforwardly, you make it accessible. You enable new relations with the materials in the archives, new threads of connection, maybe new forms of intimacy, and you give these materials back to those from whom they were taken. However, with regard to sound, we instantly run into problems. Sound is vibrating air. Sound is not a thing that you give back, or that you take, even, although—as we will see—you can “take” sound by capturing it.

In our focus on sound, a first question could be: What is its materiality? A second question could be: What are the materials in a sound archive? What do we actually give back, if we intend to repatriate sound? These are ontological questions that point at crucial epistemic shift in the acts of sound archiving and in acts of archiving generally. This epistemic shift has been pointed out by my colleague Miguel García in his article “Sound Archives under Suspicion” from 2017. Sound that is being collected, García points out, can be removed from its context, alienated from its creator, lodged in containers such as files, discs, wax cylinders, diaries, shelves, and cases, and despite all these interventions by a range of people, these sounds-that-turned-into-“things” are supposed to be free of the collector’s influence, keeping the qualities they had before the collector’s intervention (2017, 14); what is “the recording of the song” becomes “the song”. This kind of epistemic shift is really important to observe when we talk about sound, but surely the shift reaches beyond sound.

In order to illustrate this, I refer to a short sample from the Jaap Kunst Collection that I curate at the University of Amsterdam. The sample can be accessed at <https://sonic-entanglements.com/2021/02/16/sound-bite-jaap-kunst-urbinasopen-1932>. In the 1920s and ‘30s, Jaap Kunst (1891–1960) was an executive member of the Dutch colonial administration of what was then the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia. Being part of the Dutch colonial administration brought him all over the Indonesian archipelago (Heins et al. 1994, 15–16). In his free time, he recorded all kinds of music that he encountered. His urge to record so much music stemmed from his great love for these musical practices. He observed that they were on the brink of extinction, but he did not question in any way the colonial presence that caused this extinction (yamomo & Titus 2021, 47). What he recorded was the kind of sound that appeared most exotic and most different to him from a European



perspective, and which he hence experienced as most pure and authentic. The fragment **113** under consideration contains two-part singing from the northeastern part of Flores, an island in East Indonesia. What you hear is an interval between two simultaneously sounding tones that is experienced as a dissonant interval in most European music (and also in globally distributed popular music), namely major and minor seconds. In globally mainstream repertoire, a second interval between two simultaneously sounding tones usually occurs in passing only. However, in the music from northeastern Flores, the interval is sustained. Moreover, at times, the voices approach each other in tighter distance than one would aurally expect from a second interval within European tuning systems (Rappoport 2021, 165). This is a sonic marker of difference that caught Kunst's ear. In his selection of such specimens signifying difference from European musical norms, the coloniality of it can be heard. There are many ways to hear coloniality, but this is one of them.

Hearing as a Dialogical Mode of Knowledge Formation

MELÉ YAMOMO: Barbara and I are co-project leaders of this research project. We are colleagues two floors apart at the University of Amsterdam, and we've collaborated on various academic projects. When I first met Barbara, I was doing my research on "Sonic Entanglements", a research project funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) (yamomo 2017-2021). As a scholarly inquiry of epistemologies of sound, one of the questions that animated my research agenda is rooted in Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial question "Can the subaltern speak?" Spivak concludes that we cannot hear the subaltern, because if we do hear them, that is because they are speaking the language of the Empire—and would have therefore ceased to be subaltern (Spivak 1988). In our project of studying the archive of knowledges and languages that might have remained untainted by the Empire, we ask the question: Can they really not be heard, and is it really our intention to hear them? Because, in doing so, are we not just then incorporating them into what our colleague Rolando Vazquez is arguing as the universalization of knowledge (Vazquez Melken 2020)?

In this question, my interest, however, is ontological. I am interested in what disappears in history; those who are not written disappear in the archives. This disappearance transpired through the prioritization of certain senses in knowledge formation. The eyes have been given primacy since the Enlightenment. The very term Enlightenment is a visual metaphor—when light arrives, we can finally see. We see that there's a prioritization of the eyes to knowledge-gathering, and knowledge-construction began to be built around the eyes as a sense, as the source through which we understand the world through the European hermeneutics of knowledge. Ocularcentrism extends to the very literate way of understanding the world. My research therefore asks: Is disappearance in history in fact a symptom of our failure to hear? Is this disappearance due to these voices not being literate in the language of knowledge deemed universal? In this sense, how can we include the voices whose knowledge is embedded in sound, in speech and other forms of sound knowledges? These are the questions that I intended to examine in the Sonic Entanglements project.

To concretely address this question means to listen to sound recordings. I wanted to know what recordings exist. And more importantly, how can we consider sound archives as historical sources? How can sound recordings allow the audibility of marginalized histories (yamomo 2017-2021)? And even when I found these materials, I was confronted with issues of access. How can we make them accessible to the communities from whom they were taken? Expanding on these challenges



unrevealed by Sonic Entanglements, these are the theoretical thinking and practical issues that Barbara and I aim to address in the project *Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives* (Titus & Yamomo 2021-2024). **114**

Unsettling Divisions between Academy and Art

MELÉ YAMOMO: I was born in the Philippines and came to Europe in 2008 to do my postgraduate studies: my masters in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, and my PhD in Germany. I wear several hats as a postmigrant artist and scholar of color (for discussion on postmigrant discourse, see Yidil and Hill 2014, Petersen and Schramm 2017, Sharifi 2017), navigating both the academic and artistic worlds. These two roles present different challenges brought about by implicit social dynamics framed by colonial histories.

I find that, even if I have managed to enter academia, the conventions of European academia are alienating to postmigrant academics and scholars of color. The academic practice of writing in the third person perpetuates an assumed universalized positionality that hides the gender, race, and social identities of the writer. When I was student, I struggled at how and why many of the canonical works by mostly white European male scholars we were reading were not resonating with me.

As a theater person and a music composer, I often find that my critical inquiries come from the specificity of my embodiment. I mention this here to outline how I extend the notion of the archive to what Diana Taylor calls the archive and the repertoire (Taylor 2003). Often, we think of the archive in the European sense: a building where official records are kept. Taylor argues that our bodies and our repertoire of performative acts—the way we sing, we dance, we eat, in our daily small acts, our movements, or the way we speak—all of these encompass an archive of centuries-old knowledge that has been passed down through generations.

In 2018, I received funding from the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Europe to create a piece entitled *Echoing Europe – Postcolonial Reverberations* (Ballhaus Naunynstrasse 2022). It premiered in 2019 and remains in the repertoire of Theatre Ballhaus Naunynstrasse. For this performance, I worked with sound recordings, players, and historical materials from the Berlin Phonogram Archive, the Sound Archive of Humboldt University Berlin, the Phonogram Archive of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision. *Echoing Europe* is performed in a 19th-century ballroom where the colonial imageries are still perceivable in the architecture's interior decor. In the performance, I engaged the dramaturgy of the politics of sound and silence. Within the context of the long history of colonialism, the shadows of the historical discourse about my own cultural history and heritage looms over any present-day articulation. For the performance I was invited by the theater to speak about my research. However, rather than performing the expectation for me to speak, I decided to perform the violence of silence and silencing. A scene in the performance features the voice of the curator, a lecture about Southeast Asian musical culture. It was announced that, due to other engagements, he cannot be physically present and is therefore replaced with an audio recording of his lecture. Thus, even in his physical absence, we are confronted with the omniscience of the white male scholar's voice on the topic of formerly colonized culture.





Figure 1

From the performance of "Echoing Europe

- Postcolonial Reverberations", 2019

(Photograph by Zé de Paiva©)

In this process of making the piece, I also reflected on my role as a European-educated artist and scholar. In my artistic and scholarly practice, how am I not reiterating the colonial repertoire that history has been embedding in our bodies? How am I not just complicit in the extraction of knowledge from my own culture to be presented? Am I just becoming a translator of this knowledge to Europe? In one of the scenes, I restaged the image from a historical postcard (from ca. 1910). The drawn and color-painted image depicts an Igorot villager on the left and a white man in what appears to be military uniform, with a phonograph in between them. The phonograph horn is pointed at the Igorot man. A text on the upper side of the postcard reads: "A Subuagane's first experience with a phonograph, Mountain Province, Island of Luzon, Philippines" (fig. 1).

My entanglement with this violent historical colonial image is a critique of myself. How am I not perpetuating this same colonialist extractivist behavior as the American recordist a hundred years ago? I, therefore, constantly reflect on this and ask myself: How do I interrupt my own scholarship? This is why my artistic practice is an equally important aspect of my research. Through performance, I situate my thoughts and knowledge as they are embodied in my brown, queer body. Performance as research is a step beyond writing as a practice of scholarship. Writing is a technology of knowledge production embedded within the particularity of the visual sense. It is a technology that is not always necessarily accessible to communities with whom I want to speak.

"As a European-trained artist and scholar who grew up within contexts of postcolony, how am I not replicating the colonial enterprise of extracting culture and knowledge in my work in the colonial archive? How do I disrupt the embodied habitus of my European education and of the imperialist economies of culture?"

(MELÉ YAMOMO).

De/Colonial Curatorship

BARBARA TITUS: Through my collaboration with meLê, I became better aware of my own multiple positionalities as well as personal and familial histories in the execution and formation of my profession as an academic with a permanent position. Trained as a music historian of music composed in Europe (often pretentiously referred to as "art music" or "classical music"), I decided to reorient myself toward musical expressions beyond Europe after my doctorate (Titus 2016). Between 2008 and 2018, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork in South Africa, investigating the epistemic dimensions of Zulu maskanda music (Titus 2022). My experiences in South Africa confronted me with the colonial legacies of the epistemic tools in which I had received training and that reached far beyond historiography, ethnography, and comparative research into the technology of writing itself. Through my participation in maskanda practice, I experienced the potent epistemic agency of sonic modes of expression. Music does not only transmit conceptual stories and histories; it also conveys norms and forms of eloquence through its sonic capacities: vocal timbres, tunings, string resonances, scales. Through musical behavior, people are able to reconfigure experiences of time and place, being transported to real and imagined homes and pasts. It enables people to (re)gain agency over their own and someone else's bodies through gestures, dance routines, voice inflections, and playing techniques. Not only in KwaZulu, South Africa, but also in the City of London or in Amsterdam's pop temple, Paradiso. Hence, like meLê, I regard sound as a powerful complement and alternative to conceptual and visual modes of knowing that are all located in the body.



There was a motivation for me to look beyond European music after my doctorate. This **117** motivation was informed by white and colonial privileges that I only became aware of gradually. I spent large parts of my childhood in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in the 1980s. My father grew up on a dairy farm near Surabaya and had never set foot in the Netherlands before his seventeenth birthday. By that time, in 1956, he was no longer able to settle permanently in that gray and cold little country by the North Sea, and he managed to get himself a university lectureship in human geography that necessitated him to be in Java for at least three months each year, for research and teaching at the Universitas Gadjah Mada. He always brought his family along, so I lived in Yogya for three months per year in the first twelve years of my life.

With my appointment as an associate professor of cultural musicology at the University of Amsterdam in 2013 came the curatorship of the legacy of Jaap Kunst. This legacy consists of a collection of sound recordings, photographs, silent film, correspondence, manuscripts, and a library with a wealth of material from the entire Indonesian archipelago, as well as of “ethnomusicology” as an academic discipline. Kunst is widely considered to be a founding father of this discipline, being credited with coining the name in the mid-20th century (Kunst 1950). I was thrilled and heavy-hearted at the same time. Engaging with Kunst’s legacy meant coming full circle for me. It also meant a confrontation with my own entitlements and agencies, founded to a large extent on the academic and colonial capital that I had inherited from my parents and grandparents. They had earned a living and gained their positions in Dutch and Indonesian societies through and thanks to colonial infrastructures of power and white privilege. I am earning my living and gaining my position in current Dutch and Indonesian societies by trying to criticize and unsettle the constellations that they built. This position emphatically questions my curatorship of the Jaap Kunst collection. Am I the person to curate this material?

Moreover, even in the 1980s, when Indonesia had long been politically independent from the Netherlands, the experience of colonial relations based on racist divisions of labor and capital seeped into my being as a white Dutch child. My parents had always told me and my brother that we were guests in this country without any special entitlements. Yet, we had a whole army of personnel—a gardener, maid, cook, cleaner, driver, and guard whom we then called “servants”. The white privilege we enjoyed translated into everything we did, covering the entire spectrum from indulgence to charity. In my collaboration with meLê and my Southeast Asian colleagues in the DeCoSEAS project, I need to face this personal and familial past that extends into the present through what I think I am able to do and say, in the time and space I think I am able to occupy, and in the themes and concerns that I prioritize in coordinating this project together with meLê.

Decolonizing Sound Archives through Access, Agency, and Discourse

MELÉ YAMOMO: As outlined by Rolando Vasquez, decolonization is not a topic of research (Vasquez Melken 2020). With DeCoSEAS, we do not consider decolonization as a question of what, who, or when. It is a question of how. Decolonization is a method. We employ hearing and listening as dialogical modes of knowledge formation in order to negotiate, establish, and understand de/colonization.



There are three keywords in developing this method. (1) First is the fundamental importance of archives, museums and heritage centers, and institutions to provide access. However, providing access is only the first and most basic step, and the work does not stop there. (2) Even more pertinent is the transfer of *agency* over the curation of the sonic heritage. And this intertwines with a more pertinent concern: (3) Who gets to create the *discourse* about these materials? And therefore, how do we diversify the voices that create the discourse and dialogue about records that we have kept in our archives? **118**

With these three agenda points, we centralize the needs and wishes of our Southeast Asian partners with whom we work in our project. We work with universities, archives, museums, NGOs, as well as individual researchers, artists, and activists in Southeast Asia. We want to bring to the fore what they need for their specific projects, their ideas, artworks or research, or what is necessary for the emancipation of their communities.

BARBARA TITUS: We intend to disclose a couple of seminal collections with music from Southeast Asia that are located in Europe. The project is a Dutch-British-French collaboration, partly because of the requirements of the funding body, but also since all these European nation-states continue to have considerable post/colonial interests in the Southeast Asian region. We decided to disclose the Jaap Kunst Collection, but also recordings from the BBC Empire Service in late colonial and early postcolonial times that were broadcast from the 1930s onwards up to the 1950s, and later recorded. They are now at the BBC Archive Trust with the metadata in the British Library and, like the Jaap Kunst Collection, they are largely inaccessible. With this corpus we see how important sonic records are as historical sources: voices, emotions, stances, ideas, sensitivities can be heard on these recordings that haven't made it into recent historiographies. Our British Principal Investigator, Cristina Juan, is going to handle this collection during the project, while meLê and I will deal with the Jaap Kunst material.

The third collection is entitled *Songs of the Thrice-Blooded Land* (Rappoport 2009). In the 1990s and early 2000s, our French Principal Investigator, Dana Rappoport, recorded ritual music of the Toraja people that is very much on the brink of extinction, mainly due to Christian mission. These are colonial impositions in the present (i.e., in the late 20th and early 21st centuries). The music, visuals, lyrics, translations, and scholarly annotations have already been published, but on media (such as DVDs) that are becoming increasingly inaccessible. In the context of DeCoSEAS, Rappoport migrates this material from the DVD to an online environment, in order for Toraja communities in the Tana Toraja region and other parts of the world to continue to use her work as a resource for their almost extinct rituals that are still practiced.

With these three collections, we want to establish an online platform that we call *Southeast Asia Hearing*. We want to make these collections accessible there, but also use the platform as a portal to collections in Southeast Asia. We also plan to facilitate data mirroring for researchers, artists, cultural diplomats, and activists from Southeast Asia to access the material in their own regions. This practical dimension of the project is not its ultimate aim. Rather, we regard it as a means to rethink acts of curation. Obviously, these digitizations are acts of curation in themselves; we'll need to think continuously about categorizations, taxonomies, and conceptual conventions that are at times genuinely painful to use, also through their potential inescapability. Thus, we use these disclosures as pilots to rethink and unsettle such academic conventions.



Four Initiatives to Renegotiate Access, Agency, and Discourse

One way in which we want to unsettle this is to invite scholars from Southeast Asia to come to Europe for a couple of months, through funding provided by us, to access the archives we have under our curation and archives we work with, such as the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (NISV) in Hilversum and the Centre de recherche en ethnomusicologie (CREM) in Paris.

This Visiting Fellowship serves two aims. Firstly, it is important for the Fellows to see and be present in the places where these materials are stored and located, and to touch and hold these materials. Secondly, we would also like to ask these fellows to make an inventory of what kind of hurdles they encounter if they access the archives, since these hurdles are often invisible to me: I tend to overlook them, or I may be blind or deaf to them because they do not hamper me, thanks to my privileges. Once we have an inventory of hurdles (with regard to language, physical access, or additional ideological obstacles), we intend to formulate recommendations for other archives to make their collections more accessible. The second initiative is the digitization of the materials as an act of curation in itself, which we outlined above.

The third initiative is one of joint publication, in which we invite advice from our Southeast Asian partners. Often, European and North American scholars pose an idea about a volume and then invite scholars from Southeast Asia to contribute. This may seem like a suitably collaborative approach, but it is frequently still edited by a European or North American person. I also hear from my Southeast Asian colleagues that they read books by scholars from the United States or Europe about music from their country. What they read in these books is not particularly remarkable for them. In Java or Bali, everyone knows the things about gamelan music that Europeans and North Americans report on with surprise and amazement from their Eurocentric perspective. However, Asian scholars implicitly remain obliged to cite this Euro-American research in their own work in order to be taken seriously by their global peers. They are forced to reiterate Euro-American epistemic paradigms and observations as authoritative scholarly knowledge in global academic discourses, despite the limited remarkability of these paradigms and observations. With DeCoSEAS, we intend to turn that around. We want to make sure that being edited based on what our Southeast Asian colleagues think is important. Specifically, with regard to the music and sounds we discuss.

Our fourth initiative is a range of outreach projects that cover the spectrum from awareness projects in Europe to workshops for journalists and schoolteachers, but also outreach projects in Southeast Asia to ensure that the archive material is being brought outside the walls of the institution, outside the walls of the university, outside the walls of the archive. For instance, we came up with the idea of an Inter-Asian song contest that would allow artists and singers access to materials from the archive, in order to build new relationships with that material. As outlined above, meLÉ's work as an artist is central not only to outreach as such, but is one of the epistemic foundations of the entire project, blurring the division between art and academy.

South-to-South Conversations and South-to-North Agencies

120

MELÉ YAMOMO: As a consortium involving different cities, localities, and regions, we employ a translocal approach in our research project. We do this through the different constellations of partnerships and connections within our network.

Our consortium is composed of different academic, cultural, and non-government organizations within Southeast Asia bridged by translocal interests to re-examine shared colonial and postcolonial histories. The use of the term translocal, as opposed to transnational, is a deliberate choice to describe how some decolonial processes are specific to localities and regions that might not be aligned with the interests of hegemonic nation-states or former colonial states. We aim to support conversations, repatriation of heritage materials, and transfer of technologies directly to or between local communities whenever possible.

Within Europe, we work with archive institutions that hold sound heritage about and from Southeast Asia. The realization within Europe for the necessity to address its colonial past cannot be separated from the individual national agenda of the Netherlands, France, and the United Kingdom. Our consortium aims to discuss collective actions across former colonial institutions and national polities.

Bridging Europe and Southeast Asia's relationship, we want to think about how colonialism historically framed and controlled the flows of knowledge between Southeast Asia and Europe. With decoloniality entering popular discourse in Europe, it easily becomes a "trendy" topic for European academic, artistic, and cultural institutions competing for grants and subsidies to perform social relevance. The danger of subsuming the decolonial agenda within the neoliberal economy of social capital is that this interrupts, if not outrightly hijacks the intellectual, artistic, and affective labor of thinkers, artists, and activists doing the groundwork in former spaces of colony. To many colleagues whose individual and social survival and sustainability is dependent on decolonization, this agenda has been their life's work. What happens if we take up the space of speaking over the intellectual labor of individuals and communities? How can we disrupt the colonial behavior of extracting the intellectual, artistic, and emotional labor of the formerly colonized to profit from the academic and cultural capital of their work?

With these questions in mind, DeCoSEAS intends to liaise with institutions that are already doing this work. We want to give them the space and we want to give them the stage. Our role in this constellation is that of what we might call in Europe a dramaturge: somebody who might assist, if needed, in reflecting about what our partners already know and do. In expanding the idea of dramaturgy through the lens of performance studies, we can consider our role as a social dramaturge in how we analyze and consider the role of individual positionalities, institutions, and—within social hierarchies—relations and social dynamics. One of these partners is the Laon-Laon network, a group of sound archivists from throughout Asia who have been working on grassroots archiving projects for the past fifteen years. In this way, we intend to foster an inter-Asian way of thinking and working as a form of Global South-to-South conversation.

Decolonial work also needs to disrupt the North-to-South production and flows of knowledge. As a legacy of colonialism, this way of thinking presumes Europe as the universal site of knowledge



production, and that such knowledge needs to be distributed to the rest of the world. In this **121** epistemic logic, the playscript entails the theorization of “decolonization” in Europe that needs to be exported back to former spaces of colony—which means that Europe would also profit culturally, politically, and economically from this enterprise.

Instead, we draw hermeneutic methods from sonic epistemological processes: How can we step back and be silent so that marginalized voices can emerge through the use of some of the resources that we have? Our resources aim to amplify these voices. With listening we allow flows of knowledge from the Global South to the Global North. How do we listen to the voices from the Global South in making decisions about colonial heritage? How might the colonial European institutions listen to their perspectives and needs in curating heritage materials taken from Southeast Asia and stored in Europe?

-

References

- Ballhaus Naunynstrasse. "Echoing Europe – Postcolonial Reverberations". Accessed 15 March 2022. https://ballhausnaunynstrasse.de/play/echoing_europe_-_postcolonial_reverberations/.
- García, Miguel 2017. "Sound Archives under Suspicion". In Susanne Ziegler, Ingrid Åkesson, Gerda Lechleitner and Susana Sardo (eds), *Historical Sources of Ethnomusicology in Contemporary Debate*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 10–20.
- Heins, Ernst, Elisabeth den Otter, Felix van Lamsweerde (eds.). 1994. *Jaap Kunst—Indonesian Music and Dance: Traditional Music and its Interaction with the West. A Compilation of Articles (1934–1952) originally published in Dutch, with Biographical Essays*. Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute/University of Amsterdam.
- Kunst, Jaap. 1942. *Music in Flores*, translated by Emile van Loo. Leiden: Brill (Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie; 42).
- _____. 1950. *Musicologica: A Study of the Nature of Ethnomusicology, its Problems, Methods, and Representative Personalities*. Amsterdam: Koninklijke Vereeniging Indisch Instituut (Mededeling; 90 / Afdeling Culturele en Physische Antropologie; 35) [2nd exp. ed., retitled *Ethnomusicology*, 1955; 3rd ed. 1959].
- Petersen, Anne Ring, and Moritz Schramm 2017. "(Post-) Migration in the Age of Globalisation: New Challenges to Imagination and Representation". *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture* 9, no. 2 (2017): 1–12.
- Rappoport, Dana. 2021. "The Long Journey of the Rice Maiden from Li'o to Tanjung Bunga: A Lamaholot Sung Narrative (Flores, Eastern Indonesia)". In James J. Fox (ed.) *Austronesian Paths and Journeys*. Canberra: ANU Press.
- _____. 2009. *Songs from the Thrice-Blooded Land: Ritual Music of the Toraja Sulawesi (Indonesia)*. Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Sharifi, Azadeh. 2017. "Theatre and Migration: Documentation, Influences and Perspectives in European Theatre". In *Independent Theatre in Contemporary Europe: Structures – Aesthetics – Cultural Policy*, 381–403. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 271–313.
- Stelder, Mikki. 2023. "The Crow's Nest and the Hold" In *The Future of the Dutch Colonial Past*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, pp.
- Taylor, Diana. 2003. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Titus, Barbara & meLê yamomo. 2021–2024. *Decolonizing Southeast Asian Sound Archives*. JPICH-funded research project, accessible at www.decoseas.org.
- Titus, Barbara. 2022. *Hearing Maskanda: Musical Epistemologies in South Africa*. London [etc.]: Bloomsbury (Music & Sound Studies).
- _____. 2016. *Recognizing Music as an Art Form: Friedrich Theodor Vischer and German Music Criticism, 1848–1887*. Leuven: Leuven University Press.
- Vazquez Melken, Rolando. 2020. *Vistas of Modernity: Decolonial Aesthetics and the End of the Contemporary*. Amsterdam: Mondriaan Fonds.
- yamomo, meLê. 2017–2021. *Sonic Entanglements: Listening to Modernities in Sound Recordings of Southeast Asia, 1890–1950*. NWO-funded VENI Research project, accessible at <https://sonic-entanglements.com/>
- yamomo, meLê & Barbara Titus. 2021. "The Persistent Refrain of the Colonial Archival Logic / Colonial Entanglements and Sonic Transgressions:



Sounding Out the Jaap Kunst Collection". In Rasika Ajoykar (ed.) *Postcolonial Sound Archives: Challenges and Potentials* [the world of music (new series) 10/1], 39–70.

Yildiz, Erol, and Marc Hill. 2014. *Nach der Migration: Postmigrantische Perspektiven Jenseits der Parallelgesellschaft. Gastronomía Ecuatoriana y Turismo Local*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.



The moving human body

