

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/gcul20

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To cite this article: Meike Lettau & Özlem Canyürek (04 Mar 2024): Epistemological shifts, power imbalances and conflicts at documenta fifteen: decolonial cultural policy conceptions beyond Eurocentric universalism, International Journal of Cultural Policy, DOI: <u>10.1080/10286632.2024.2316101</u>

To link to this article: <u>https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2024.2316101</u>

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Published online: 04 Mar 2024.

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Epistemological shifts, power imbalances and conflicts at documenta fifteen: decolonial cultural policy conceptions beyond Eurocentric universalism

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the epistemic dimension of exclusionary institutional structures in the German cultural sector in relation to cultural production, this article searches for decolonial cultural policy conceptions that are critical of knowledge-related power imbalances and their entanglements. By taking the international art exhibition documenta fifteen in Kassel in 2022 as a case study, the paper examines the community- and collectivitybased practices and methodologies introduced by the Indonesian artist collective ruangrupa. In particular, this empirically grounded inquiry focuses on ruangrupa's lumbung values as a proposition of epistemic pluriversality. In this way, it also reveals various conflicts that occurred before and during the fifteenth edition of the exhibition, arisen from epistemological differences in perspectives, narratives, aesthetics and artistic methodologies between colonial and capitalism-critical cultural practices and Western art institutions. Following the tenets of the decolonial turn and decolonial thought, the paper explores alternatives to the dominant Eurocentric universalism of knowledge through the example of documenta fifteen, transcending the binary of either/or and advocating pluriversality as a universal option, rather than Eurocentric universalism as a singular totality, as proposed by Walter Mignolo, Following Catherine Walsh, the quest for the recognition and dissemination of pluriversal perspectives is intrinsically linked to the search for other ways of knowing, thinking, theorising and being that resist totalising power. In doing so, the authors ultimately seek to outline some attributes of decolonial conceptions of cultural policymaking, aiming at reducing epistemological inequalities in accessing cultural production for marginalised and racialised artists and cultural practitioners.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 24 April 2023 Accepted 5 February 2024

KEYWORDS

Collectivity; conflict; cultural policy; documenta; epistemic inequality; pluralisation of knowledge production; decolonial conceptions of cultural policymaking

Structural discrimination and devalued knowledges and their agencies in the German cultural sector

Following the public criticism about the lack of (especially migration-related) diversity in publicly funded cultural institutions, specifically the personnel, audience structures, programming and social role of these institutions have been increasingly questioned. Despite the lack of sufficient cultural statistics on the different facets of diversity, Whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, and ablebodiedness are assumed to be the dominating features in the German cultural sector (Canyürek

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2022, 75). The recent study 'Diversity in Cultural Institutions 2018–2020', surveyed first time 67 federally funded cultural institutions in terms of staff, programming and audience, indicates that people with a 'migrant background'¹ [sic] and disabled people are the most underrepresented groups as employees (Zimmermann 2021), subsequently their knowledge and experiences are excluded from these institutions.

Although since the mid-2000s, promoting cultural diversity has been one of the main objectives of German federal cultural policy, people with their own or family migration experience are among the most excluded groups in the German cultural sector (Canyürek 2022; Schneider 2011; Sharifi 2011; Terkessidis 2010).² One in four people are part of a migrant family or have experienced migration. In 2022, 20.2 million people with a 'migrant background' lived in Germany, representing 24.3% of the total population (Statistisches Bundesamt 2023). In practice, 'migrant background' only refers to particular groups, 'exclusively to "racially different" Germans and not for example to "ethnic German" white immigrants' (El-Tayeb 2011, 180). Fatima El-Tayeb, argues that the racialisation of some people is embedded in the idea of a singular white European identity, and threats are perceived as coming from those not considered to belong (e.g. communities of Colour – Black, Roma, and Muslim) and these racialised Europeans remain as permanent newcomers even when they are from second, third or fourth generations (El-Tayeb 2015, 286).

Structural discrimination is directly linked with questions about social justice (e.g. exclusion by language, underrepresentation in decision-making, programme curation and leadership, no or less access to institutions). Recently, a few cultural policy programmes and institutions have been trying to address these problems in Germany.³ However, measures to tackle intersectional structural discrimination and promote equal opportunities for excluded actors are usually still blank spots within publicly funded cultural institutions and existing cultural policy conceptions are mainly top-down and Eurocentric in nature.

Investigating the epistemologies, power imbalances and exclusion at ruangrupa's documenta fifteen

By taking the international art exhibition documenta fifteen in Kassel from June to September 2022 as a case study,⁴ the article examines the community- and collectivity-led practices and methodologies introduced by the curatorial artist collective ruangrupa, recognising them as potential decolonial prepositions for cultural policy conceptions that are critical of knowledge-related power imbalances and their entanglements in the cultural sector. In this regard, the article does not investigate concrete cultural policy instruments, instead it analyses cultural policy from the practice on a discursive level under a decolonial lens, focusing on the engagement of ruangrupa as an artist collective from Indonesia operating in a German cultural institution. Pluralisation in the cultural sector is approached in terms of access to cultural production for discriminated and racialised artists and cultural workers with a 'migrant background'. To this end, the article addresses the necessity of reducing epistemological inequality through counter-hegemonic narratives, artistic and aesthetic interventions to expand the Western⁵-centric imagination of knowledge production (De Sousa Santos 2016). The authors argue that an integral part of a holistic cultural policy that aims to support diversity in the cultural sector should primarily address the knowledge-related dimension of intersecting forms of exclusion, rather than focusing on the inclusion of discriminated and racialised artists within the existing Eurocentric frameworks. With this aim, the article discusses documenta fifteen as a case study in terms of pluralisation of knowledge in cultural production.

The authors examine the practice of *lumbung* and its core values in the search for decolonial cultural policy conceptions that validate and promote different and so far, devalued forms of artistic knowledge. Acknowledging the inherent link between the epistemic dimension of power imbalances and various forms of exclusion, the authors investigate:

(1) What principles and methodologies of collective curating are to be found at documenta fifteen that involve diverse epistemologies and actors in cultural production?

(2) What role do existing power disparities in cultural policies and institutional structures play in allowing conflicts to arise which reproduce inequalities of access to and participation in cultural production?

(3) What implications can be drawn from the findings for decolonial cultural policy conceptions that aim to reduce epistemological inequality in access to cultural production?

The research design of this paper rests upon an interdisciplinary approach, drawing perspectives from sociology together with the theoretical foundation of decolonial knowledge-making. The authors apply an exploratory case study approach (Yin 2018) to investigate documenta fifteen and its relevance 'to use theory to make sense of evidence and to use evidence to sharpen and refine theory' (Ragin and Becker 1992, 225).

To bridge theory and practice, the authors conceptualised, organised and led a five-day summer school 'New impulses for an equality conscious diversity framework in cultural policy' with 25 participants by Zeppelin University Friedrichshafen in cooperation with *CAMP notes on education* – part of the educational department of documenta fifteen – from 30th August to 5 September 2022 in Kassel. The aim was to discuss the prerequisites of cultural policy conceptions oriented toward the diversification of knowledge systems.⁶ During the summer school, five thematic areas have been researched (1) production, (2) arts education, (3) structures, (4) conflicts and (5) cultural policy.⁷ The qualitative data set, which was developed with a bottom-up approach by and with the participants, includes field data and records, exhibition visits, conversations with art mediators and team members of documenta fifteen, artistic performances by participants developed during the summer school and oral presentations of the field analysis.⁸

In addition, document analysis of media and newspaper reports, publications of policymakers and press statements were used. Particularly, the final report of the *Committee for scientific accompaniment* was employed to outline various forms of conflict that occurred during documenta fifteen (Deitelhoff et al. 2023).⁹

The state of the art shows that publications regarding the documenta fifteen are recently still in their infancy.¹⁰ Apart from the massive media reporting, until now a few scholars in Germany published research findings from the perspectives of aesthetics, curating, art mediation, art history and institutional conflicts (Baecker 2023; Mandel 2023; Mandel and Thiel 2022; Nixon 2023; Van den Berg 2023). Publications emerged from documenta fifteen itself are the exhibition catalogue (documenta fifteen 2022a) and one edited volume of the Sobat-Sobat reflecting critically on their working methods and conditions as art mediators (Efstathopoulos and Tabach 2022).¹¹

This article aims to close an identified research gap linking the case study of documenta fifteen to the field of cultural policy and decolonial approaches. So far only one author has been identified who explores a distinctive postcolonial perspective on documenta fifteen (Shah 2022).

Ruangrupa's *lumbung* values as re-canonisation, epistemic pluriversality and conflicts

The documenta exhibition was first organised in 1955 after the Second World War, mainly to showcase European art that was not exhibited during National Socialist rule in the city of Kassel in Germany. Today, it is the major global exhibition of contemporary art, which takes place every five years for 100 days.

For the fifteenth edition of documenta in 2022, the Indonesian art collective ruangrupa was appointed as curators in February 2019, which appeared to be a novel decision compared to many previous editions: the collective approach of an artist group from Indonesia taking over decision-making in a traditionally-set German cultural institution was uncommon in comparison to publicly-funded cultural institutions in Germany. This appointment followed the approach of the first non-

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white and non-European curator, Okwui Enwezor, who was in charge of documenta 11, at that time initiating a determined turn away from the colonial origin of the foundation of documenta:

Okwui Enwezor started in 2002, and some of which was continued in 2007, 2012, 2017, and also 2022; and to rebuild it in a way that "transparency" and "sustainability" (both stated aims of ruangrupa) are not just catchphrases for collective endeavours, but the guiding principle of a venerable institution still struggling to come to terms with its own past. (Heiser 2022; also Shah 2022, 139)

In this respect, several aspects are relevant to analyse the epistemological shift attempts, power imbalances and conflicts surrounding documenta fifteen, which are inherently linked to various differences in approaches in terms of existing German cultural institutions and policy conceptions, in this case: documenta as a Western cultural institution and ruangrupa as curators from Indonesia, following the *lumbung*¹² methodology as part of their colonialism and capitalism-critical epistemological approach. Starting from its establishment in Jakarta (Indonesia) in 2000, the art collective ruangrupa, loosely translated into English as 'art space', applies the practice of *lumbung* as an artistic methodology that is firmly linked to an epistemology challenging European universalism. For ruangrupa, *lumbung* is not a concept; it is a practice which changes dynamically through interactions between people:

"*lumbung*" is the Indonesian word for a collectively governed rice barn, where the gathered harvest is stored for the common good of the community. [...] Understood not only as a building but also as a way of working and living together, *lumbung* will be operational in the lead-up to documenta fifteen in 2022, and beyond. (documenta fifteen 2022e)

lumbung aims for a collaborative and sustainable model for the welfare of the community, in which resource use is not only limited to economic means but also includes ideas, knowledge and programmes (documenta fifteen 2021): 'The lumbung practice enables an alternative economy of collectivity, shared resource building, and equitable distribution. *lumbung* is anchored in the local and based on values such as humour, generosity, independence, transparency, sufficiency, and regeneration' (documenta fifteen 2021), intended for the communal good, very much in opposition to neoliberal capitalist ideology. This approach and these values – compared to the primarily dominant Eurocentric values in German cultural institutions – are clearly an attempt to contribute to the coexistence of heterogeneous epistemologies, implying a decentring of Eurocentric knowledge and its values in these institutions, weaving a new path to re-canonisation. Undoubtedly, this model of curatorship¹³ comes with a different historical background based on the Indonesian context and its colonial legacies. The multi-ethnic state of Indonesia used to be a Dutch colony for over 300 years. Its independence was declared in 1945, and accepted in 1949. Since this period, the country has been shaped by a conflicted past. During the Cold War, Indonesia was positioned between capitalist and socialist worlds, then during the Suharto regime, it was influenced by a dictatorship from 1967 to 1998, which was the time in which most of today's contemporary artists got trained in their professions. Apart from a critical situation of censorship and limited freedom of art and expression, they faced difficulty in accessing the international art markets (Sobat-Sobat 2022).

Under these circumstances, collective gatherings were used as a means of fighting against the regime, as ruangrupa describes the emergence of the group in 2000, two years after the official end of the dictatorship. Artists went into local communities, made artistic drawings and sketches and brought together diverse knowledges and expertise. These artistic positions were meant to resist the regime, and the logic behind them was described as: we do not have the money, we do not have the resources, how to organise ourselves? The emergence of the artist collective ruangrupa came out of the need for missing spaces for artists to work, as they basically used the public space. The group began to question the individual genius way of artmaking, which naturally led them to develop more collective forms of artmaking (Sobat-Sobat 2022) based on the idea of *lumbung*.

By taking *lumbung* as a departure point, documenta fifteen itself not only became part of the *lumbung* but also provided a space for an epistemology challenging European universalism rather than *lumbung* being *showcased* as a non-European curatorial practice at documenta fifteen:

Against this background, when we were invited to make a proposal for the fifteenth edition of documenta, instead of integrating ourselves into the long-established documenta system, we decided to stay on our path. We invited documenta back, asking it to be part of our journey. We refuse to be exploited by European institutional agendas that are not ours to begin with. We believe that we must make this experience of imagining an edition of documenta contribute back to our own endeavours. (documenta fifteen 2022a, 12)

The *lumbung* approach, by means of its values and methods, is a counter approach to westernised exhibition making in the institutional curatorial and artistic framework of documenta. The practice of *lumbung* and its values signify a profound difference between the German cultural institution of documenta and the various perspectives of collective cultural production – practising *lumbung* – by ruangrupa and subsequently *lumbung members*.

Collective and decentralised curation: interactivity, spaces of collectivity and treating 'audiences' as friends

Collectivity – as a core approach of *lumbung* and ruangrupa's curation – is implemented in various ways at documenta fifteen. In the following, we will introduce a few selected approaches: (a) the invitation of artist collectives, (b) spaces for collectivity at exhibition venues, (c) methods for collective interaction and (d) treating 'audiences' as friends.

(a) documenta fifteen breaks the traditional, stable theme-based international exhibition model. Instead, it emphasises the dynamic artistic participation and collective shaping that evolve together with the *lumbung* practice and commons as a resource. Instead of presenting positions of single artists, invited artist collectives -lumbung members- presented their local art practices, offering a different perspective from the traditional Western-centric themes and working methods in art circles. This practice is a form of a decentralised collective approach, which implies that there is no single authorship, but that the work is process-oriented, rather than product-oriented. Through collective approaches, the aim was to build a sustainable ekosistem, which is different from the ecological concept of the ecosystem. Ekosistem describes collaborative network structures through which knowledge, ideas, programmes, and other means are shared and linked.¹⁴ These collective approaches can be seen as concrete counter-hegemonic propositions to the communal environment, embedding artistic practices into everyday life and understanding knowledge as a social intervention in reality (De Sousa Santos 2018). In this sense, a solid artistic and political positioning is visible to the bare eye that resists the status quo and the artist-in-the-centre approach. Instead of the model of a 'genius artist producing exceptional artwork' for one of the most reputable international art exhibitions, ruangrupa told the invited collectives not to commission new artworks for documenta but bring existing ones and continue working on them in Kassel. For that reason, many studio setups could be seen in the exhibition and often, unfinished artworks were presented (Sobat-Sobat 2022).

The dissolution of ownership and authorship as well as the questioning of the meaning and reception of 'art' and Western aesthetics were found at the core of the curatorial work in various exhibited works. This model of curation can be read as an attempt to counter the narrow perception of Western art and art production, by putting collectivity into practice and opening up conversational spaces that remove the separation between art and everyday of life without imposing ideas of what art is and how it should be perceived.

(b) Spaces for collectivity and conversations as part of the venues of the exhibition are another example. *ruruHaus* was the central meeting point, considered a living room in the city of

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Kassel, where visitors and people could come together apart from meeting on the streets. Spaces for collectivity were created to open up private spaces for collective gatherings. Another example was the transformation of the established cultural institution *fridericianum* into a school, which was called *fridskul*: 'serving as a repository for shared resources, such as knowledge, stories, and experiences' (documenta fifteen 2022b). This example shows the transformation of a museum into a place of action and living, as parts of the artistic team also lived in the building during their stay at documenta and set up *Godkitchen*, a place where visitors and artists cooked and interacted together. Using space as an intervention in neo-liberal capitalist logic, as in the example of communal cooking, the exhibition venues became living spaces, rearranging the disrupted connection between people and places as dynamic sites for community well-being. This could also be interpreted as a way of 'decentring' the Eurocentric universalism, which often suggests to focus solely on the exhibition venues.

- (c) Additionally, ruangrupa proposed several methods for collective interaction with the visitors and audiences, in 'activating' the exhibition. One method is *nongkrong*, which is an Indonesian slang term for 'hanging out together'. It includes casual conversation and togetherness, the sharing of time, ideas or food without judgement on achievements or validations. The idea was to copy the rice barn as a social space to the exhibition venues (documenta fifteen 2022a). Another method is harvesting, which refers to passing on knowledge *and lived* experience through artistic recordings of discussions and meetings, both of which are considered as resources in a non-exploitative way (documenta fifteen 2022a).¹⁵
- (d) Treating 'audiences' as friends is another example for the collective approaches of ruangrupa. Under the motto 'make friends, not art', they developed an alternative art mediation approach through employing approximately 130 Sobat-Sobat. Sobat (pl. Sobat-Sobat) is the Indonesian term meaning 'friend' or 'companion' (documenta fifteen 2022d). In this view, audiences do not have a subordinate role; they are perceived as part of the *ekosistem* of cocreation of knowledge production and circulation. ruangrupa's notion of treating 'audiences' as friends introduces an entirely new concept of participation and art mediation in a Western institution where the audience's role is limited to seeing, observing and learning.

In our analysis, we identify a conflict between ruangrupa's principles of collectivity, processorientation and interaction with the artworks, spaces, and the audience with art mediation concepts of a German cultural institution. ruangrupa considers art and cultural production as a process and social activism rather than just aesthetics, following approaches such as: we shall change our ways of looking at things. In this way, the audience is confronted with 'a conscious process of unlearning, of putting oneself into the perspective of others' (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 96, translation by the authors). This includes conceiving visitors as being cultural producers in the social realities of the exhibition, which is also reflected in harvesting, rather than considering visitors as pure consumers.

From dominant Eurocentric universalism to epistemic pluriversality

In the following, we associate ruangrupa's artistic practice and methodology with 'decolonial turn' and thought, addressing to multiple dimensions of epistemological inequality, shaped by the intersections of coloniality, capitalism and patriarchy (Bhambra 2007, 2014, 2015; 2022, De Sousa Santos 2006, 2007, 2016, 2018; De Sousa Santos and Martins 2021; Grosfoguel 2007, 2010; Maldonado-Torres 2011, 2017; Mignolo 2007, 2011; Mignolo and Walsh 2018, Quijano 2000; Walsh 2023). Hence, the article departs from a theoretical stance that follows the decolonial turn, which proposes decolonisation as a continued and unfinished project (Grosfoguel 2010; Maldonado-Torres 2011, 2017), particularly focusing on 'the epistemology of absences, both of absent knowledges and absent agents' (De Sousa Santos 2016, 161). The epistemological aspect recognises 'colonialism as a form of sociability that is an integral part of capitalist and patriarchal domination, and which, therefore, did not end when historical colonialism ended' (De Sousa Santos 2018, 19).

We argue that documenta fifteen was an attempt to transcend the binary of either/or and advocate for pluriversality as a universal option, rather than Eurocentric universalism as a singular totality (Mignolo 2018, 147). The concept of epistemic pluriversality, as defined by Mignolo, brings forth alternative knowledges and emphasises the significance of 'pluriversal perspectives' that recognises the coexistence of multiple worldviews, ontologies, and ways of knowing (De Sousa Santos and Martins 2021; Maldonado-Torres 2011, 2017). Following this line of thought, we consider that the aspiration for a canonical shift towards 'decolonial cracks' (Walsh 2023) and 'the dominant culture's loss of hegemony' (Marchart 2022, 10) can already be identified – though on a much smaller scale in comparison to documenta fifteen – in documenta X and documenta 11 (Marchart 2022, 10).¹⁶ We argue that as much as documenta fifteen has sought to open up to pluriversal perspectives and other knowledge systems, entrenched colonial legacies and their entanglement in documenta gGmbH and German cultural policy have produced inherently epistemic conflicts in an attempt to 'change the rules of the game'.¹⁷

In this sense, we regard the approaches of ruangrupa and *lumbung members* as a form of cracking coloniality in the matrix of power (Walsh 2023). The practice of *lumbung*, as a non-institutionalised practice, enables the collective to claim an equal position of their heterogeneous epistemologies during documenta fifteen, as '*lumbung* is a proposal for self-initiated interdisciplinary collectives to sustain' (documenta fifteen 2022e). Sunil Shah constitutes 'documenta fifteen (2022) as both a radical approach *and* a delegitimisation of the postcolonial Other' (Shah 2022, 136) 'on terms set by postcolonial subjects themselves' (Shah 2022, 141). Following Walsh, we consider this approach as more about making decolonial cracks for the social existence of other ways of knowing, thinking, theorising and being, which signifies a re-existence as subjects that radically and distinctly resist totalising power (2023, 8–9).

Oliver Marchart argues that big biennials in the art world – as cultural *institutions*– work as hegemony machines 'that supported the inner nation-building of colonial and industrial nations of the nineteenth century' (Marchart 2022, 7). Given that documenta is one of these hegemony machines, the appointment of ruangrupa as curators is an interesting case to analyse in the light of such strong epistemological power imbalances, particularly in terms of re-existence of epistemologies on their own terms that resist Eurocentric universalism. Therefore, we ask to what extent this epistemological shift attempt could take place in an established Western institution, as Marchart argues:

The point is that these postcolonial canon shifts did not emerge from the institutions themselves but were carried into those institutions—which were founded to serve as cultural legitimations of Western dominance and today themselves face a legitimacy problem—by postcolonial and antiracist struggles. (Marchart 2022, 29)

In the sense of Marchart, the canon and the 'power of re-canonization' or 'counter-canonization' (2022, 35–43) applies to the example of ruangrupa creating their own *ekosistem* based on collectivity, which can be interpreted that 'sharing is a precondition, in locally specific situations, for emancipatory political action' (Marchart 2022, 52). This canon, introduced as the practice of *lumbung*, shows firm structural epistemological disruptions as Ade Darmawan, a member of ruangrupa, states:

We think the wider reaction to our show has shown the frictions that occur when different structures are forced to work together. [...] Most Western art institutions have been colonised to such an extent—from education to business models—so when different voices are in charge, it becomes a threat. ruangrupa represents a very different way of doing things and the fact that this show was about placing things into practice, rather than sloganeering, was a real threat to certain authorities—be they museum directors, art market players or even politicians. (Jhala and Darmawan 2022)

Conflicts between Western-dominated knowledge production and epistemic pluriversality

In the following, we analyse how the epistemological shift attempts led to multiple conflicts at documenta fifteen. We argue that these conflicts stem from existing epistemological power

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disparities and Eurocentric institutional structures operating within colonial, capitalistic and paternalistic modes that reproduce inequalities in access to and participation in knowledge-making. Thus, fundamental barriers to the recognition, validation and dissemination of these pluriversal perspectives remain.

lumbung – originally developed in the Indonesian post-dictatorship context in a predominantly farmers society – was practised during documenta fifteen in a German cultural institution. We situate this as an example of the epistemic pluriversality preposition introduced to the German context, and thus leading to conflicts in the German cultural sector, media and cultural policy. The scepticism towards the epistemes of the participating collectives was reflected in various German media, one being articulated by the well-known art critic Hanno Rauterberg in the newspaper 'Die Zeit' as follows:

The curators predominantly focus on art that owes its significance to a social network; if the network is missing, much seems lost, not infrequently bloodless. For the mass appeal of the large-scale show - the rice barn thinking is only suitable to a very limited extent. Like their art, ruangrupa would like to transform their documenta into a form of life. But what should that look like, a life form, to be acquired by a day ticket for 27 euros? (Rauterberg 2022, 49, translated by the authors)

Similar doubts about ruangrupa's artistic methodology, which began long before the opening of the exhibition in the German media, later deepened due to the immense disparity between how different epistemes conceive of artmaking. This disparity shows itself also in terms of strong hierarchies and hegemonic power structures of a Western cultural institution. In the following, we investigate the conflicts that occurred through operating ruangrupa's curatorial approach in a German cultural institution. One finding of the case study is that epistemological power disparities and Eurocentric institutional structures operate within colonial, capitalistic and paternalistic modes. Thus, they play a massive role in reproducing inequalities in access to and participation opportunities in knowledge-making.

The stakeholders in power at documenta fifteen include Museum Fridericianum and documenta *qGmbH* (public body, non-profit), which constitute themselves through an executive board (Geschäftsführung) and an artistic team as support to the curatorial directors; two shareholders (Gesellschafter*innen) the City of Kassel and the State of Hesse; the supervisory board (Aufsichtsrat), an external decision-making body complied out of 10 stakeholders, mostly politicians and the city councillor in charge of cultural affairs (Kulturdezernentin), which were endowed with very high decision-making authority; the documenta commission (documenta Beirat/documenta Kommission) compiled out of eight external members; ruangrupa as invited artistic directors (private not-for-profit actor, temporary, contract-based) as well as cultural policy stakeholders, external funders and the public (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 122).¹⁸ Between all these interacting bodies, different power relations – partly undefined and untransparent, partly implicit – hierarchies can be detected. In contrast to these structures, the curatorial approach by ruangrupa, one of the core stakeholders, followed the idea of decentralisation of power and a completely horizontal, non-structured approach, which proves a rupture and a foundation for various conflicts. ruangrupa invited fourteen collectives as lumbung members, which have, in turn, invited further collectives and artists, in total, almost 1500 artists were part of the exhibition ecosystem. A similar approach was followed regarding the budget allocation, ruangrupa distributed 100.000 Euro to each of the fourteen collectives, which were in charge of handling the budget through collective management and decision-making.

Research results show that the governance structure of the institution and its logic clash with the artistic methodology and vision of ruangrupa. This immense difference in mindset and power imbalance between the institution of documenta and the *lumbung members* raises the question of what knowledge legitimises the norms of cultural production and whose epistemologies dominate. ruangrupa did not want to showcase art, they wanted to show social practice coupled with activism, but documenta as an institution followed the aim to display art. Both positions were difficult to unite due to the profound epistemological and structural differences between them. Particularly, in terms

of very distinctive epistemological standpoints, collective approaches can create transformative moments in the establishment of mutually-agreed forms of work, without the hegemonic institution determining the framework conditions of this agreement. As Deitelhoff et al. pointed out that the specific governance structure of documenta, and the fact that no operational modes for conflicts were defined, apart from dialogue and communication, could be considered as a risk due to the predetermined structural conflict situation between the different stakeholders and the lack of external voices. To this end, Deitelhoff et al. suggested a clear revision of the governance structures of documenta (2023, 120).

Another example of an epistemological power disparity is the funding approaches that unfold in the field of tension between capitalist and post-capitalist logics as well as patronage and decentralised approaches. The public funding of documenta fifteen covered a budget of 42 million Euro in a complex system involving all three levels of cultural policy in Germany: The city of Kassel on the municipal level and the State of Hesse on the state level (*Länder*) as shareholders and the Federal Cultural Foundation on the federal level. This fragmented, multi-level funding structure is rather unique as, usually, state and federal level funding exclude each other in Germany. This logic is in discord with the post-capitalist and decentralised approach of ruangrupa's curation, which provides new meanings to cultural production and art-making as described by its member Darmawan:

We think it should be downscaled, there should be some other business model, because the structure here is so based on local and national politics. Documenta is trapped into a really capitalistic business model that requires it to make things on a big scale, for which you need a big budget, public funding and then it becomes commercialised. And then you can easily question where the art is there. (Jhala and Darmawan 2022)

Following this argument, Višnja Kisić describes ruangrupa's approach as follows:

[...] the arrangement was that all participating collectives and artists get two-year-long monthly universal basic income, plus an equal sum for production purposes. This has been one of the economic and financial backbones of practising *lumbung* - a common rice barn - in a global art world framework, introducing fair allocation and equal distribution of resources. (Kisić 2022)

Kisić claims that these self-organised practices and collectives are already in the making of post-capitalist cultural politics outside of traditional state policies to promote other-than-capitalistic ways of being, aims, methods, relations and forms (2022). Post-capitalist cultural politics relies on 'power-to' actors instead of 'power-over' (Holloway 2002) and they do not aim to replace one system with another; they are rather practices guided by collective actions, interrogating and disrupting capitalist logic and world relations (Kisić 2022). In this context, the *lumbung* practice offers a collective approach to counter the existing model of the capitalistic global art world in a counter-hegemonic way and power-sharing among the stakeholders: 'We don't think we can work within neoliberal infrastructures, whether that be Western institutions or major shows in places like Singapore' (Jhala and Darmawan 2022).

Escalation of conflicts in anti-Semitism allegations

The anti-Semitism allegations¹⁹ towards ruangrupa have been one major conflict in the public discourse and stem from a specific sensitivity due to the Shoah and Germany's role in it as well as the responsibility today. It is important to mention that this specificity was not properly considered by all involved stakeholders. Following Landau-Donnelly et al. (2023), the list of events in Table 1 is an attempt to make visible (a) the pre-antagonisation phase of the conflict where it was not very tangible and was not recognised as such by all stakeholders, and (b) the re-antagonisation phase of the conflict where it escalated when the institution of documenta and other cultural policy actors determined the conditions and agents of decision-making processes.²⁰ The conflict-attuned approach presents crucial learning opportunities to detect the factors related to hegemonic power dynamics involved in the negotiation of conflicts and failings of cultural policy-making in addressing the controversies that occurred during documenta fifteen. This way of thinking points to 'agonistic democracy' (Mouffe 2008), an understanding that 'assumes a conflictual notion of democracy, which focuses on practices of

conflict.		
Date	Occasion	Involved Actors
18.06.2020	Press announcement: documenta fifteen and <i>lumbung</i> practice. Announcement of the first <i>lumbung</i> members	documenta fifteen
07.01.2022	Documenta fifteen: Anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism in lumbung	Alliance against anti-Semitism Kassel
28.04.2022	Dealing with anti-Semitism: Central Council of Jews writes inflammatory letter to Claudia Roth about Documenta	Central Council of Jews
May 2022	Accusations and counter-accusations to be discussed at the event series 'We need to talk. Art – Freedom – Solidarity'. The event series was suspended.	documenta fifteen
07.05.2022	Statement: Anti-Semitism accusations against documenta: A Scandal about a Rumor.	ruangrupa
	Open letter: 'A letter against apartheid'. Signed by members of the search committee, the artistic team and ruangrupa Unveiling of the banner: 'People's Justice' by Taring Padi	Diverse actors (Search committee, artistic team, ruangrupa)
	Official opening of documenta fifteen	
	Discovering anti-Semitic representation in the banner 'People's Justice': initially covered up, then removed on June 21 in agreement with the artistic direction and Taring Padi	Taring Padi, ruangrupa, documenta fifteen
	5-points plan by German state minister for culture (Claudia Roth)	German state minister for culture (Claudia Roth)
24.06.22	Statement of Taring Padi about the dismantling of the banner 'People's Justice'	-
29.06.2022	Anne Frank Educational Center sets up an information booth on the topic of anti-Semitism at documenta fifteen and organised a panel discussion with documenta on June 29, 2022 entitled 'Anti-Semitism in Art'	Education Center Anne Frank, documenta fifteen
06.07.2022	Public hearing on documenta fifteen in the Bundestag's (Federal Parliament) Culture Committee: Sharp criticism of the management of documenta in Kassel	Bundestag's (Federal Parliament) Culture Committee, Ade Darmawan (ruangrupa representative)
08.07.2022	Anti-Semitism expert Meron Mendel announces termination of his consulting work due to a lack of support from the management of documenta fifteen	Anti-Semitism expert Meron Mendel
08.07.2022	Artist Hito Steyerl withdraws her participation in documenta fifteen	Artist Hito Steyerl
10.07.2022	Alleged racist and queer-hostile attacks on members of the Indian collective 'Party Office' became known, which subsequently withdrew from documenta fifteen	Die Hessische/Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA), Collective 'Party Office'
15.07.2022	Termination of managing director Sabine Schormann's contract by mutual agreement and setting up a committee to provide scientific support for documenta, which officially began its work on July 27, 2022	Supervisory board and shareholders of documenta gGmbH
	Alexander Farenholtz, a former documenta managing director, is hired as interim managing director until the end of the exhibition	documenta fifteen
	'Censorship Must Be Refused' Letter from <i>lumbung</i> community	5 7
27.07.2022	Open letter from the <i>lumbung</i> community documenting further assaults and cases of vandalism, for example in the rooms where the artist collective A Question of Funding was supposed to exhibit	<i>lumbung</i> community
28.07.2022	The Central Council of Jews in Germany criticises the drawings in the banner 'People's Justice' as clearly Anti-Semitic	Central Council of Jews
	Appointment of a <i>Committee for the scientific accompaniment</i> of documenta fifteen by the shareholders of documenta to take stock of the incidents of Anti-Semitism and to examine how such incidents can be prevented in the future	scientific accompaniment of documenta fifteen
	'What is a friend to you?' Open letter by art mediators (Sobat- Sobat) criticising their working conditions	Sobat-Sobat
23.08.2022	'The consequences of the holocaust are experienced differently' ruangrupa in conversation with German Cultural Council	German Cultural Council, ruangrupa

Table 1. Chronology of selected	actions and reactions	by different stakeholders	regarding the anti-sem	itism allegations and
conflict.				

Table 1. (C	Continued).
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Date	Occasion	Involved Actors
23.08.2022	The Anti-Semitism researcher Jakob Baier publishes in the TAZ a harsh criticism of the film compilation 'Tokyo Reels' by Subversive Films as being Anti-Semitic	Jakob Baier, TAZ, Subversive Films
26.08.2022	The artistic direction contextualises the artwork 'Tokyo Reels'	ruangrupa, Subversive Films
10.09.2022	Release of two statements by the expert advisory board: Recommendation to stop the screenings of 'Tokyo Reels' until an appropriate contextualisation is available, due to their consistently Anti-Zionist and partly anti-Semitic content and their incalculable effects	Expert advisory board
10.09.2022	'We are angry, we are sad, we are tired, we are united' Letter from <i>lumbung</i> community (e-flux)	lumbung community, e-flux
13.09.2022	'We are also angry, we are also sad, we are also tired, we stand together' Statement by the Jewish Community Kassel and the Sara Nussbaum Center for Jewish Life on anti-Semitism at Documenta	Jewish Community Kassel, Sara Nussbaum Center for Jewish Life on Anti-Semitism
15.09.2022	Statement of the Search committee (Findungskommission) of documenta fifteen supporting ruangrupa's position	Search committee (Findungskommission) of documenta fifteen
22.09.2022	Statement 'Germany has cancelled us'	ruangrupa
22.09.2022	Interview 'We never aimed at being perfect'	ruangrupa
24.01.2023	Legal report 'Fundamental-Law Boundaries and Fundamental- Law Protection Requirements of State Cultural Funding' A legal report commissioned by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media of Germany	Prof. Dr. Christoph Möllers, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media of Germany
02.02.2023	Final report of the Committee for scientific accompaniment of the documenta fifteen	Committee for scientific accompaniment of the documenta fifteen

Most items have been extracted out of the report by Deitelhoff et al. (2023). In addition, media reports and statements on the documenta website have been added by the authors.

negotiation of conflict and consensus within the state, even though conflict and consensus are certainly also negotiated outside the state' (Landau-Donnelly 2017, 31; Mouffe 2016). By no means, does this proposition suggest an imposed consensus on conflicts by policy stakeholders. On the contrary, it recognises that conflict is a constitutive feature of democratic politics, but "what is important is that conflict does not take the form of an 'antagonism' (struggle between enemies), but the form of an 'agonism' (struggle between adversaries) (Mouffe 2016). The following table²¹ shows selected actions and reactions by different stakeholders that led to an escalation of the conflict.

From the very beginning, German cultural policy stakeholders expressed a fear regarding anti-Semitic positioning of members of the *lumbung* community, as some members of ruangrupa stated sympathy with the BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions), and thereover no artists involved in documenta fifteen officially identified as Israeli and/or Jewish (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 7–8).²²

Deitelhoff et al. define four phases of the conflict, reflecting the pre- and re-antagonisation phases, in their final report by the Committee for the scientific support of documenta fifteen: (1) In the preexhibition phase, the anti-Semitism allegations against the artistic directors have been named by actors of the Jewish community and regarded as racist attacks by the *lumbung* community.²³ (2) During the exhibition opening, on 18 June 2022, specific incidents of anti-Semitic representations were found f.i. in the artwork *People's Justice* (2002) by the Indonesian art collective Taring Padi, which was displayed at the beginning of the exhibition and later removed.²⁴ While the managing director of documenta, Sabine Schormann, was suspended, the anti-Semitism expert and director of the Anne Frank Educational Centre in Frankfurt Meron Mendel was brought in as an external consultant, but he resigned already in the beginning of July due to a lack of communication and interaction. (3) The third phase started on 19 July 2022 with the new managing director Alexander Farenholtz where the failure continued with his reaction regarding the *Archives des luttes des femmes en Algérie* (Archives of Women's Struggles in Algeria). (4) In the fourth phase (09/2023 onwards), on 1 August 2022, an external committee was appointed, the communication with the artistic directors ended and the managing bodies of the institution followed a passive mode (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 73).

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In the following, we analyse selected positions and reactions of ruangrupa as artistic directors, documenta fifteen as a German cultural institution and German cultural policy stakeholder to demonstrate how enormous deficits in consensus building led to a conflict escalation between the three main parties. The reactions by documenta as subsequent interventions in the exhibition were primary de-installation, invisibilisation and contextualisation (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 104). ruangrupa and the *lumbung* community mainly used statements and open letters²⁵ after their direct dialogue with the documenta was not considered favourable and the dialogue was terminated. This led to a huge communication gap between the artistic directors and the institution itself which has solidified opposing positions. As an immediate reaction by a German cultural policy stakeholders, the Minister of State for Culture Claudia Roth from the Green Party published the '5-point plan' for documenta addressing the state of freedom of art in regard to anti-Semitic content in artworks and demanded a public investigation of the anti-Semitism allegations, clarification of responsibilities and structural reforms f.i. the involvement of federal stakeholders in documenta among others (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien 2022). Additionally, a public hearing on documenta fifteen in the Bundestag's Culture Committee was initiated, resulting in sharp criticism of the management of documenta (06.07.2022).

As the conflict further escalated, ultimately documenta as an institution reacted with a public investigation that was executed by a newly appointed *Committee for the scientific accompaniment of documenta fifteen* (01.08.2022) which published a comprehensive report in 2023 (Deitelhoff et al. 2023).²⁶

The conflicts around anti-Semitism allegations once again showed how conscious or unconscious exclusion of specific stakeholders and epistemological power imbalances draw the lines of the *debate*. The institution of documenta and cultural-political decision-making actors acted in a paternalistic manner, driven by rapidly growing public and media reactions, lacking adequate dialogue with ruangrupa and transparency in their actions to the above-mentioned incidents.²⁷

In conclusion, we consider that adopting an agonistic perspective on conflicts (Mouffe 2016) is vital for decolonial cultural policy conceptions that aim to support epistemic pluriversality by providing a different setting in which non-Western actors and epistemologies can be part of the conflict negotiations as adversaries. The analysis of documenta case study signifies the lack of conditions of conflictual consensus prompted by an agonistic approach.²⁸

Epistemological decolonisation as a paradigm proposal for cultural policy

Acknowledging the lack of diverse knowledges and positions in publicly funded cultural institutions in Germany, the conflicts and hegemonic shift attempts in decision making positions at documenta fifteen constitute a pathbreaking case study regarding processes and limitations in institutional structures and Eurocentric cultural policy to promote equal opportunities for excluded actors and epistemologies. As art historian Karen van den Berg states: 'Remarkably, both its leading defenders and those highly critical of the exhibition, noted that after this documenta, the art world can no longer simply persist with the same set of theories and hegemonic institutional structures' (Van den Berg 2023).

The examination of ruangrupa's collective curating principles and methodologies reveals epistemological shift attempts, power imbalances and conflicts linked to colonialism and capitalism, among others. This analysis points to a profound challenge to the current status quo of cultural institutions and cultural policy in Germany. Consequently, the paper suggests a call for a paradigm shift in cultural policy conceptions, aiming for 'epistemological decolonisation' (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 121) to thrive in the Western-centric German cultural sector. Our point is not to develop operational instruments but rather enable a shift in re-thinking cultural policy on a conceptual level.²⁹ We further claim that without a critical questioning of the terms of condition, the aim of deconstructing exclusionary structures in cultural production and decolonial change suggestions may result in reproducing colonial and Eurocentric imperatives and framings guided by Western epistemologies. Conflicts between the institution and heterogeneous epistemologies perceived through agonistic perspectives, are a crucial part of decolonial cultural policy conceptions. In this context, we suggest a conflict-attuned cultural policy approach, which recognises conflict as an integral dimension of the cultural field (Landau-Donnelly et al. 2023, 2–3). documenta fifteen shows that in the absence of a conflict-attuned approach, conflicts were negotiated only through informal routines and were not seen as a window of opportunity to establish 'cultures of conflict' (Landau-Donnelly 2024, forthcoming) in which discrimination and racism-critical knowledge could thrive for cultural practices, institutions or policies. We conclude that the conditions of conflict negotiation, stakeholders and power they constitute, valid forms of knowledge and aesthetics are decisive factors in how access to and participation in cultural production are understood. In this respect, we posit that conflictual consensus has the potential to facilitate decolonial transformations in institutional structures of cultural organisations.

The lack of internalisation of diverse ways of knowing beyond Eurocentrism in German cultural institutions, exemplified by conflicts, shows the significant power imbalances between different stakeholders. Validation of heterogeneous epistemologies requires a frame of mind that supports alternative modalities that seek to dismantle exploitative colonial and capitalist structures. Our case study analysis indicates that decolonial cultural policy conceptions are fundamentally linked to the knowledge domain and its liberation from Eurocentric universalism in order to 'alter the principles and assumptions of knowledge creation, transformation, and dissemination' (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 145). The research findings underscore the necessity for a decolonial shift in cultural policy that advocates for the validation and dissemination of counter-hegemonic perspectives. Above all, addressing epistemic inequality is imperative, which cannot be disassociated from dealing with Eurocentric universalism in order to 'change the terms of conversation' (Mignolo and Walsh 2018, 144). For the flourishing and cultivation of decolonial prepositions in the cultural sector, devalued epistemologies should be considered as 'partnerships of equals'.

lumbung and ruangrupa's curation focusing on knowledge and *lived* experiences is a valid case study to re-think collective approaches, governance and producing, shared resource building, values, canon and 'audiences' as cultural producers, among others. These identified forms of re-canonisation include the less-familiar forms of art embedded in everyday practices, aesthetics, expertise, lifestyles, worldviews, narratives and thus heterogeneous epistemologies. This implies the recognition and validation of excluded knowledges to counteract the ontological inequality that excludes non-Western forms of knowledge, thus contributing to decolonial knowledge formation in the German cultural sector.

The findings show that institutional and epistemological power disparities are continuously reproducing inequalities in access to and participation in knowledge-making. The research brings us to the conclusion that epistemological decolonisation as a paradigm for cultural policy can potentially lead to the recognition and dissemination of devalued forms of artistic knowledge and thus social justice envisioned and redefined by decolonial prepositions. Finally, cultural institutions in Germany and beyond must ask themselves the question: What forms of knowledge production do we want to support and how should we achieve this if we truly want to change our Eurocentric institutional structures?

Notes

- Since the 2005 Microcensus, the Federal Statistical Office of Germany defines people with a 'migrant background'. The term refers to immigrant and non-immigrant foreigners, immigrant and non-immigrant naturalised people, (late) resettlers, and the children of these groups who were born Germans (Statistisches Bundesamt n.d.). This frequently used stigmatising term functions as an overarching label of othering, therefore it is written in quotation marks to emphasise the racialisation of some people in German cultural policy discourse.
- 2. In this context, 'migration' is an umbrella term to comprehend the overlapping forms of discrimination and racism.
- For example, 360° Fonds für Kulturen der neuen Stadtgesellschaft [Fund for Cultures of the New Urban Society] Kulturstiftung des Bundes [German Federal Cultural Foundation], Durchstarten – Berliner Projektfonds Kulturelle Bildung [Berlin Project Fund for Cultural Education], Perspektiv:Wechsel [Perspective:Change] – Alliance of the Federal Association of Independent Performing Arts and ASSITEJ.

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- 4. The article investigates only the fifteenth edition of documenta. Previous editions are not part of the analysis.
- 5. In this article, Western and European are used interchangeably in the context of absent forms of knowledge, pointing to the hegemonic Western modernity discourse, which assumes that Western/European knowledge is universal and is the only valid form (Ahmed 2000; Barnor 2007; De Sousa Santos, 2016; Mignolo 2007; Puwar 2004). Santos refers to this knowledge as the 'cognitive empire' and defines it as the Eurocentric epistemological North, regardless of where this knowledge is produced geographically (2018, 6).
- 6. The summer school participants were a heterogenous transnational group of Bachelor and Master students of cultural studies from various universities and junior cultural practitioners from Egypt, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Serbia and Turkey.
- 7. The summer school focused on five areas of research: (1) exploring the integration of new co-creation methods in artistic practices at documenta fifteen, (2) examining the emergence of new cultural and political education formats and their transfer effects, (3) investigating the role of existing power relations in perpetuating inequalities and strategies for overcoming them, (4) identifying conflicts and challenges in transcultural artistic work, and addressing accusations of political negligence anti-Semitism, racism, Islamophobia, othering, queer- and transphobia within the institution and the broader cultural landscape, and (5) generating cultural policy strategies from documenta fifteen for implementing an equality conscious diversity framework.
- 8. The summer school was followed by the workshop 'New approaches in cultural practices, institutions and policies for an equality-conscious diversity framework' organised by the authors at Zeppelin University in March 2023, with the participation of some of the summer school attendees and Zeppelin University students, who took part in other events related to the analysis of documenta fifteen. Together with the participants, we further deepened the analysis from different dimensions, focusing mainly on the implementation of ideas such as commoning, collectivity, decentralisation of power and conflicts around documenta fifteen. The results of this workshop are in the process of publication in a collective volume by Routledge (Lettau and Canyürek 2024, forthcoming).
- 9. The analysis involved documents published in German and English in the time frame from January 2022 to February 2023.
- 10. In 2024, a collective volume is in process of publication by the authors to present the research findings of the summer school at documenta fifteen and the follow up workshop (Lettau and Canyürek 2024, forthcoming).
- 11. A publication by Gross et al. investigates the historical perspectives of politics and art at documenta from its beginnings onward (Gross et al. 2021).
- 12. As some researchers argue that contemporary cultural production by non-Western artists per se embodies a coloniality incorporated by historical legacies, the example of *lumbung*, based on a traditional Indonesian rice barn and its social and aesthetic phenomena is interesting for cultural policy as they deliberately are developed by an art collective that we consider as part of 'epistemologies of the South', in the sense described by de Sousa Santos.
- 13. It is worth noting that the word 'curatorship' has Western roots; ruangrupa collective does not call itself curators. The epistemic difference in approaches is also reflected in the meaning given to the term curator.
- 14. This also shows that collective approaches function as a lived practice in a natural environment, not primarily and exclusively in an exhibition.
- 15. 'Harvesters listen, reflect, and depict this process from their own perspectives, forms, and artistic practices. Harvests can be humorous, poetic, or candid. They can take the shape of a post-it note, a written story, drawing, film, sound piece, or meme. Harvesting can be seen as a way of collective writing that enables continuous collective learning, from different sensory experiences' (documenta fifteen 2022c).
- 16. However, these efforts did not suggest a concrete epistemological canonical shift aimed at introducing diverse artistic knowledges that are equally valid and valuable to Western epistemologies and circulating these different ways of knowing to visitors and the broader public.
- 17. The article does not claim that ruangrupa envisioned or inspired decolonial cultural policy conceptions, as this was not the aim of the art collective. Rather, it is concerned with how heterogeneous epistemologies clash with each other whilst being performed in parallel at one cultural institution, because ruangrupa through practising *lumbung* deliberately refused to be *included* or *incorporated* in the German cultural institution, which stands for the dominant Eurocentric epistemologies.
- 18. There are some specifics regarding the governance structures of documenta fifteenth edition to mention: First, a new advisory board, the documenta commission (*documenta Kommission/Beirat*) was introduced for the first time, legally implemented as a restructuring of the search committee (*Findungskommission*) that selected ruangrupa (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 124). Second, in the supervisory board (*Aufsichtsrat*) the German Federal Cultural Foundation abstained from their seats (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 129), which is seen as problematic 'because the supervisory body currently lacks a whole-of-government and whole-of-society perspective' (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 129, translated by the authors). In conclusion, the supervisory board then only consisted of both shareholders, the City of Kassel and the State of Hesse political actors, with their perspectives (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 129). According to Deitelhoff et al., external experts in the supervisory board were crucial voices that could have helped to identify and intervene in the conflicts earlier and with different perspectives (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 122-123).

- 19. The authors of the article want to make clear that some artworks exhibited in documenta fifteen contain anti-Semitic representations. We clearly condemn any form of anti-Semitism and other acts of discrimination and racism. As anti-Semitism is not the focus of the article, nor is it our area of expertise, it therefore not discussed in detail. For further readings on the reappraisal of the anti-Semitic allegations see Deitelhoff et al. (2023) and Möllers (2023).
- 20. As a third phase, Landau-Donnelly et al. define de-antagonisation as a defusing state of a conflict. This phase is not used in this article as due to the contemporariness of the conflict is not necessary for our analysis (Landau-Donnelly et al. 2023).
- 21. No claim to completeness of the chronology.
- 22. Although Ade Darmawan, who spoke on behalf of ruangrupa to the German Bundestag (Federal Parliament) on 6 July 2022, stated that documenta fifteen featured both Israeli and Jewish artists, who did not wish to be named. He added: 'We never understood our role here to be that of bringing national representations or making selections based on ethnic and religious identities' (Darmawan 2022).
- 23. 'It is obvious to us that the same mechanism of passing the ball from cyberbullies and racist bloggers to mainstream media outlets to racist attackers on the ground to politicians and even to academics is being reproduced in each situation' (*lumbung* community 2022).
- 24. See also van den Berg (2022).
- 25. F.i. Statement 'anti-Semitism accusations against documenta: A Scandal about a Rumor' by ruangrupa (07.05.2022), 'Censorship Must Be Refused' Letter from *lumbung* community (27.07.2022), 'We are angry, we are sad, we are tired, we are united' Letter from *lumbung* community (10.09.2022), Statement 'Germany has cancelled us' by ruangrupa (22.09.2022)
- 26. It is important to note that two members of the documenta commission (documenta Kommission/Beirat), Jun-Prof. Elsa Clavé and Prof. Facil Tesfaye left the commission by choice 'because they felt that the panel's focus on anti-Semitism did not sufficiently represent their perspectives from postcolonial research' (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 11, translation by the authors). From a legal point of view, the law on freedom of speech in Germany guarantees artistic freedom which 'encompasses the entire artistic work, i.e. the curatorial conception, the program design, the invitation policy, in which basically no one is authorised to intervene' (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 111, translation by the authors).
- 27. In their report, Deitelhoff et al. state the non-existence of conflict mediation mechanisms and structures at documenta fifteen, instead 'informal routines' (123, translation by the authors) have been used (Deitelhoff et al. 2023, 122–123).
- For Mouffe, agonistic interventions are already inherent in critical artistic practices as critical art embraces disagreements and brings silenced actors to the fore in order to challenge existing hegemonic structures that impose consensus (2008, 12–13).
- 29. We are aware that the case study is based on one example from Indonesia, and its specific historical background and colonial legacies, therefore generalisations and applications for other regions and cultural contexts should be treated with caution.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the reviewers and Dr. Friederike Landau-Donnelly (Assistant Professor in Cultural Geography, Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen, Netherlands) for her invaluable comments that greatly improved the text.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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