




# Beyond borders: trans-local critical pedagogy for inter-Asian cultural studies

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## ABSTRACT

This paper challenges the apparatus of the knowledge reproduction of the nationalist narrative of historical trauma that leads to the making of exclusive nationalism and unequal citizenship, particularly in East and Southeast Asia. I take the case of the 1965-66 genocide in Indonesia as an example to illustrate how the cultural trauma that took place in the Cold War Era had marked the turning point for the follow-up nation-building and the cooperative distortion of the past through the politics of denial. This phenomenon does not happen only in Indonesia but also in other countries in the Northeast and Southeast Asia. The post-event juridical reform after these historical traumas established the foundation of the national constitutions and planted the seeds for unequal citizenship in these countries. The legal practices of the post-colonial modern states repeat the colonial strategies, and the techniques of governmentality reproduce itself through the education system of all levels. I want to suggest that to go beyond the ideological borders and avoid the vicious circles of knowledge reproduction requires an innovative educational model of a trans-local and critical pedagogy in the form of curricular decolonization. It aspires for a type of the university beyond the borders, beyond the walls. Through a trans-local, interdisciplinary, and cross-referencing critical studies, we then can attend both the local but also the regional and global contexts. I also want to argue that such a model should bridge university and society that assist us in practicing epistemic decolonization to challenge the current cultural consensus.

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## Introduction

I have been teaching in the past two decades in an interdisciplinary MA and Ph.D. program of Social Research and Cultural Studies, which I established back in 2001, and I'm accustomed to the border crossing that challenges disciplinary boundaries both in curricular designs and research projects. I've always believed that there is no single discipline that can solve all the research problems in our intellectual pursuits. We need to encourage our students to be exposed to challenges from various disciplinary trainings and to acquire whatever necessary knowledge they need to deal with their projects. History, anthropology, sociology, political philosophy, media studies, film, art, literature, etc., could all be indispensable depending on the nature of the research project.

In recent ~~eight~~ years, however, after the establishment of another international program in Inter-Asian Cultural Studies in 2013, adjacent to the Institute of Social Research and Cultural Studies, I noticed a different kind of border that we need to overcome in our research and education. There is a rapid increase of international students in our classrooms, not only from East and Southeast Asia, including South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, China, and Taiwan, but also from Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe, and the US. In my classroom, we discuss theories of biopolitics, border politics, colonialism, Cold War regimes, capitalism, and neoliberalism, with various local contexts. I also design units related to contemporary issues, such as crony capitalism, migration, refugee crises, ethnic conflict, religious conflict, land justice, gender inequality, unequal citizenship, vigilantes, etc. Because of the diverse cultural and political backgrounds of our students, tensions surface in the classroom discussions. These are tensions among different ethnic and religious groups from the same societies, especially in multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and tensions between diverse political backgrounds, such as Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan, even tensions between the former colonizer and the colonized, such as Belgium and DR Congo.

I could see that most students' educational backgrounds were confined within national historical narratives and they were often not fully informed about the darker sides of the past in their countries. Nor were they always aware how heavily their local conditions were implicated and even determined by the global context. They often trusted wholeheartedly the nation-state that bred them. Their national pride, identification, and even patriotism were fostered and strengthened by the education and information fed them by government and the local educational system. They often did not doubt the legitimacy of their exclusionary ethnic or religious prejudice against other groups in their societies. Even though they might reject racism, they revealed unconscious racist attitudes against certain groups of people without knowing it.

Through readings that related parallel situations in their communities and other countries, however, my students started to realize the complexity of the past. In group reports and classroom discussions, they began to share their diverse experiences and reflect on the convoluted histories of their own countries. More significantly, they started to read studies from different perspectives related to the accounts of their past, and they initiated research projects that deal with issues that came up within a broader geopolitical and geo-economic frame of reference. The results of these projects took form as MA theses and Ph.D. dissertations on topics conceived differently than might have been the case in their own countries.

In this paper, I want to discuss how the apparatus of knowledge reproduction, especially concerning historical narratives, specifically of collective trauma, leads to the making of exclusive nationalism and even unequal citizenship, particularly in the context of East and Southeast Asia. Different forms of the nationalist narrative that differentiate the "they" group from the "we" group can disseminate through constitutional legal procedures, governmental institutions, the educational system of all levels, and popular mass media. The methods of knowledge reproduction can affect communal mentalities and form ideological borders supported by collective consensus that can last from generation to generation.

I shall first take the case of the 1965-66 genocide in Indonesia as an example to illustrate how the cultural trauma that took place in the Cold War Era had marked the turning point for follow-up nation-building and a cooperative distortion of the past through a politics of denial. Pogroms do not happen only in Indonesia, but also in other countries in the Northeast and Southeast Asia during the decolonization and the nation-building processes. "Citizenship," even though a "Western" concept, is a convenient technique for post-colonial states to stabilize and legitimize their new ruling regimes. I shall point out how post-event juridical reforms after these historical traumas established the foundation of national constitutions and planted the seeds for unequal citizenship. I will also discuss how the legal practices of post-colonial modern states, on the one hand, repeat the transnational colonial strategies of the previous governments and, on the other hand, reinforced techniques of governmentality through control of the education

system and the mass media. The ruling regimes can easily manipulate different forms of nationalist and populist sentiment during an electoral campaign or through the revision of textbooks. The Indonesian case exemplifies a general pattern that is shared by other countries in this region. Lasting stigmatization of a particular group of people and the deep-rooted antagonisms between different ethnic or religious groups still emerges in daily life interaction in these countries, especially during election campaigns. The persistence of such constituted and constituting divisive forces within these communities are worthy of further study.

To reach beyond ideological borders and avoid the vicious circles of knowledge reproduction within the confines of the nationalist perspective, I want to argue, requires an innovative educational model that makes a break from the existing epistemic paradigms. To go beyond the ideological nationalistic border, however, does not mean to embrace another episteme, for example, the concept of transnationalism or globalization. On the one hand, the naïve trust in transnationalism may overlook the fact that such an idea still indicates the network formed by the representatives defined in terms of the nation-state. On the other hand, transnational corporative organization, in the guise globalization, exercises the concentration of global capital. Instead, I propose a trans-local and cross-referencing critical pedagogy that attends not only to the local but also to regional and global contexts. We need to look at what is happening in local communities so that we do not divert our inspection by some vague universal values. I also want to argue that such a model should be a multidisciplinary practice, bridging research, education, and society. With such a trans-local and interdisciplinary critical pedagogy, we can then examine how local democratic systems, for example, are supported by the global powers, and how these systems could turn out to be the arena for local power struggles and crony capitalism. We can also challenge the fabrication of the “indigenous” discourse that rises both locally and globally, not only suppressing marginalized people in the same society but also excluding outsiders in the form of xenophobia.

Let’s begin with the case of the 1965-66 genocide and its ambiguous relation with the politics of citizenship in Indonesia.

### **Narratives of historical trauma and the politics of citizenship**

The death toll of the 1965-66 Genocide in Indonesia, according to different reports, ranges from 500,000 to one million people, and some have said 2.3 million. The official account of the Suharto government stated that the Thirtieth of September Movement of 1965 was planned as a coup d’état organized by the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). The victims were accused of being, and executed as, communist members. The practice of Suharto’s New Order regime since 1967, shortly after the incident, was to stabilize the new ruling government and to stigmatize the communist party members while targeting Chinese Indonesians as the cause of the event. The descendants of the victims were exiled into the jungle or isolated islands, deprived of opportunities to go to school, to work, or get married. The most startling fact of the September 30th incident in Indonesia is that, until today, the full account has neither been uncovered nor officially acknowledged or reconciled by the government. Chinese Indonesians still live in hidden fear under the shadow of the past. Several ethnic conflicts between native Indonesians, so-called indigenous *pribumi*, and the Chinese Indonesians, including the May 1998 riots due to the Asian financial crisis, are repercussions of the 1965-66 event.<sup>1</sup>

We need to take a look at how recent studies revealed the past and its impact on the aftermath in Indonesian history. Some studies pointed out that the genocidal violence of 1965–1966 was an anti-republican counter-revolution. Scholars have also argued that the scenario of the Thirtieth of September movement was a “convenient pretext” for implementing a preexisting plan for the army to seize state power (van Klinken, 2018; Roosa, 2006). The event allowed local elites to act despotically and turned Indonesian citizenship towards a form of indirect rule

(van Klinken, 2019). The residues of these remote cultural traumas have left traces in Indonesian society until today. Anti-communist witch-hunting prevailed over the entire three decades of New Order rule and became a core foundation of Indonesian nationalism and related religious identification (Heryanto, 2006; McGregor, 2016). It “took on a life of its own when it swept across regions and segments of various social groups.” (Heryanto, 2006, p. 35)

According to other studies (Scott, 1985; Roosa, 2006; Canet, 2018), the CIA of the United States helped in the bloody overthrow of Indonesia’s President Sukarno (Scott, 1985). The United States, together with Great Britain, Australia, Germany and Japanese intelligence played an active role not only in supplying money and communication equipment, but also in providing the names of thousands of PKI leaders to the military, and undertaking “black propaganda operation” during the killings (Scott, 1985; Melvin, 2017).

Other scholars have suggested, from different perspectives, that this incident cannot be understood merely as state-centric violence but has to be situated in colonial history and even within a pre-colonial social construct (Umar, 2016). Indonesia has around 300 distinct native ethnic groups, mostly descendants of Austronesians and Melanesians. Indonesian ethnic groups include Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, Madurese, Batak, Minangkabau, Betawi, Bugis, Bantenese, Banjarese, Acehese, Balinese, Tionghoa, and so on. Dutch military expansion to the East Indies, conquering and destroying the ancient kingdoms from 1821 to 1912, including the Javanese Kingdoms Yogyakarta and Surakarta, West Sumatra, Southern Kalimantan, Bali, Lombok and Batak, and Aceh, established a regime of colonial governmentality. The reconstruction of people in the diverse societies of the East Indies by the Dutch government, through racial categorization and the concept of citizenship, was a measure of control. Local elites were chosen to constitute a part of the colonial bureaucracy and practiced a form of indirect rule over the colony. According to the Constitution of the Dutch East Indies, Article 13, these peoples were divided, racially and arbitrarily, into three hierarchal categories: Europeans and their equivalent group (mostly Christians); Far Eastern (mainly Chinese and Arabs), such as Kapitan Cina; and indigenous people (*Pribumi*).” This categorization bestowed people with different political statuses, establishing the racialized constitution of political identities in Indonesia. (Thung, 145-146)

The concept of *Pribumi*, or the indigenous Indonesian, is ironic in itself. *Pribumi* derives from Sanskrit, combining *pri* (before) and *bhumi* (earth), meaning “first on the soil.” The term *pribumi* was used after Indonesian independence as a replacement for the Dutch colonial term *inlander*. The *inlander* (the native) is a derogatory term and is considered the lowest group within the population during the colonial period. Following independence, *pribumi* was used to distinguish indigenous Indonesians, a fictionalized homogeneous group, from people of other origins, such as Chinese Indonesians. The inhabitants on the Nusantara world, i.e., the islands beyond Java in between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, including the Malay Archipelago, were all settlers migrated to this region at different points of time. Chinese Indonesians (*Tionghoa-Indonesia*) migrated to this region through trade since the 15th century. Arab Indonesians also arrived in this region through trade during the early Islamic era, around the 11th and 12th centuries. The division between *pribumi* and non-*pribumi* is arbitrarily constructed in the post-colonial nation-building period, just as arbitrarily as the Dutch colonial government distinguishing Europeans, Far Easterners, and Inlanders.

The lasting effect of the New Order is to fixate the division of *pribumi* and non-*pribumi*, prioritize the “indigenous” population to form an Islamic state, and to institutionalize the ethnically structured model of citizenship as well as institutional discrimination (Pietsch & Clark, 2014, Harijanti, 2017, Kloos & Berenschot, 2017).<sup>2</sup> The distinction between the indigenous and the non-indigenous people, furthermore, was enforced through a range of politico-legal institutions established during the colonial era and continued into the postcolonial era, intersected through violent processes of independent movement and state-building (Taylor, 2008, Ehrentraut, 2011, Thung, 2012, McHale, 2013, Schaffar, 2017). The post-event juridical reform, through the *pribumi* priority principle, therefore, has made Indonesian citizenship a reversed version of the colonial

regime. The practice of citizenship plays a critical role in the statist exclusionary division (Thung, 2012; Harijanti, 2017; van Klinken, 2018; van Klinken 2019).

The discourse of privileging and prioritizing local “indigenous” groups emerged in the Law No. 62 of 1958 that changed the principle of *ius soli* in the first Indonesian citizenship law of 1946 to the policy of *ius sanguinis* in 1958. The use of a Letter of Proof of Nationality of the Republic of Indonesia (*SBKRI*) in the New Order regime created discriminatory practices concerning Chinese people in cases such as applying for identity cards, passports, marriage, birth, and death certificates, and so on. Some Indonesian Chinese (*Orang Tionghoa*) who have resided in Jakarta, Banten and West Java since the 17th century, but could not obtain *SBKRI* because of their weak economic condition and were unable to pay for the fee, and consequently suffered severe discriminative treatment. Even after the Suharto administration officially abolished the *SBKRI* in 1996, there were still cases of racial discrimination. Some Chinese persons holding Indonesian citizenship were required to include their *SBKRI* when applying for passports (Harijanti, pp. 1-2, 9-10).

### The border of ideology and the politics of denial

The 1984 Indonesian docudrama *Pengkhianatan G 30S-PKI* (Treachery of G30S/PKI) is the “most-broadcast and most-watched Indonesian film of all time” (Sen and Hill 2006, p. 148), and the main factor for the wide dissemination of the official narrative of this incident.<sup>3</sup> For the general public, it is perhaps the sole source of information, besides teachers and textbooks in schools, about the G-30-S/PKI event. The film, as mandatory viewing material, was shown at schools and government institutions. According to the Indonesian magazine *Tempo*, 97% of the students in the survey had seen the film. 87% of them had seen it more than once. Most people believed that the official accounts of the event were mostly true, and most people also believed that communism would be revived and so should not be taught in schools. In a survey of the domestic threat to Indonesia conducted in 1984 and 1985, communist resurgence turned out to be the most feared threat to Indonesia, ranking well above corruption. (Heryanto, 2006, pp. 49-51.)

The film presents communist party members as highly plotting and dangerous, reflecting the fear and anger that ordinary peasant families hold against the PKI. The film portrays Suharto as a hero who managed to stabilize the situation after the coup. Arifin C. Noer, the director of the docudrama, based his story on the 1968 book by Nugroho Notosusanto, a military historian. He had extensively studied official governmental sources, court documents, read the controversial Cornel Paper, interviewed numerous eyewitnesses and used archival footage and newspaper clippings contemporaneous to the event to emphasize historical and cinematic realism. The film, nevertheless, does not indicate that the 1965-66 massacre caused more than one million people’s death. For over 50 years, the antagonism against the communist/Chinese is still very alive among the Muslim communities.

In the Indonesian National Television program *Special Dialogue* produced in October 2007, about 50 years after the event, the hostess of the program interviewed Anwar Congo, one of the former executioners and a leader of the Pemuda Pancasila in the city of Medan, and his team who were participating in the shooting of the G-30-S/PKI event. The leader of the paramilitary group Pancasila Youth in the show claimed that the death of the 2.3 million communists was justified because “God is against communists,” and there would be “no reconciliation” because they will all be exterminated. These reactions correlated with the surveys conducted by *Tempo* magazine in 1984-1985 and testifies to the general mentality of people in Indonesia, fortified by the ideological border covering these years till today.

The case of the 1965-66 genocide in Indonesia illustrates how a cultural trauma that took place in the Cold War Era had marked the turning point for follow-up nation-building and a

cooperative distortion of the past through the politics of denial. During the post-WWII and the so-called Cold War Era, several hot wars, large-scale massive killings, and enforced concentration camps took place in different countries. Example cases in Northeast Asia, on the one hand, include the 2/28 massacres of 1947 that caused the death up to 28,000 in Taiwan and ensued the Martial Law period that lasted till 1987. The armed crackdown of the Jeju Uprising from 1948 to 1949 that caused the death of 100,000 people in South Korea. The cases in Southeast Asia, on the other hand, are more intense. The enforced segregation of half a million Chinese in 452 New Villages in Malaysia during the Emergency in the 1950s, the Vietnam-American War from 1955 to 1975 that caused the death of 182,000 civilians, the Khmer Rouge regime that lasted from 1968 till 1999 and caused the death of 2 million people, and the 1965-66 genocide in Indonesia as discussed above.

### **Overcoming the borders with alternative perspectives**

*The Act of Killing* (2012) and *The Look of Silence* (2014), directed by Joshua Oppenheimer, present an alternative narrative of historical trauma that moves beyond ideological and emotional borders (Reestorff, 2015, Canet, 2018). In the *Act of Killing*, the director Oppenheimer invited Anwar Congo to help him out in the production of his documentary to re-enact the way he, Anwar, executed his victims. Anwar felt compelled to perform as accurately and vividly as possible, boasting of his heroic deeds while seeming to enjoy the moments of repetition. However, these horrific scenes of reenactment bring forth a different reality. The boasting, bragging and hilarious enjoyment in the reenactment of the past, and his dancing the cha-cha, all appear as a fragile façade that covers his denial of an unacknowledged remorse and the nightmares of his act of killing that haunt him.

These scenes of reenactment created multiple perspectives on both the victimizers and the victimized. The audience re-experienced the dire fact of the cruelty of the event. The testimonies presented by the victimizers further challenged the fictionality of the government's official narrative. Through the juxtaposition of the human brutality with nature, we experienced a subtle but penetrating critique by the director. We saw the montage from the slaughtering act to the silence and the tranquility of the sea. We also see the jump cut from the sadomasochistic reenactment of the execution scene to the jungle. The lively discussions on the Indonesian National Television program of the paramilitary group concluded with viewing private collections of zoological specimens. The juxtapositions of these scenes created a piercing confrontation with reality.

In the *Look of Silence*, a sequel to *The Act of Killing*, Oppenheimer arranged Adi Rukun, a local Chinese Indonesian optic doctor, to conduct a series of interviews. Adi wants to find out what happened to his brother Ramli, who was murdered during the 1965-66 communist purge. The use of Adi as the interviewer is brilliant. The scarlet-framed eye-classes serve as a perfect metaphor. It refers to the blindness and the disavowal of the people who have denied historical truth. It also refers to the attempt to adjust the eyesight. The horrific details of what these murderers did in the past are narrated, with vivid physical reenactment, presenting a series of visual images, as explained by Oppenheimer, like those in Dante's *Inferno* or Hieronymus Bosch's paintings. The persecutors are still in power and live without being punished. The teachers are still teaching the intimidating lessons of the communists in classrooms. The mayor, the teachers, and the other neighbors in the same village were the killers. The threatening words from the interviewees are as real as the historical event in the past 50 years ago.

Oppenheimer raises the question of whether it is possible or adequate to present a realistic portrayal in an interview with John Roosa (Roosa, 2014). Oppenheimer said,



I consider it axiomatic that the past, the unspeakable reality, the unspeakable real of what they did, the horror of what they did, is beyond our grasp – it is in the past and the past itself is beyond our grasp – and yet it still exerts its terrifying force in the present. ... [It] would, actually, displace precisely the past that it would seek to pin down, to fix, to make knowable. (Roosa, 2014, p. 417)

He and his Indonesian collaborators, therefore, decided to focus on the *algojo* (executioner) and asked them to re-enact the execution scene. In so doing, the former executioners also found an outlet to talk about the horrifying past. Through this process, Oppenheimer managed to make a film that could intervene in the “economy of impunity, fear, and glorification.” The documentary is intended, according to him, as an intervention to expose “the world of impunity.” He wants to show “the rotten heart of the present-day political system built by – and presided over – by killers.” (Roosa, 2014, pp. 419, 422)

Oppenheimer’s documentaries demonstrate the power of intervention and confront directly the persistent practice over five decades of a politics of denial. By re-enacting the affective dimension of the perpetrators, his documentaries brought forth the recollection of the moments of cruelty in the past. The sadomasochistic reality of the political system of the past and the present are exposed at the same time. This double exposure allows the audience to see the role cultural trauma plays in the making of unequal citizenship in Indonesia and how it is still alive even 50 years after the traumatic event. The documentaries are, therefore, not of the past but living documents for the present - as archive, trope and prompt to further action.

### University beyond the walls: trans-local critical pedagogy

How do we bring these multiple and contesting perspectives into our classrooms? How do we transform the double exposure of the past and the present through diverse cultural texts for classroom discussions? How do we enable our students to re-visit the past histories of their countries through a foreign eye? I suggest, through a trans-local and critical pedagogical intervention, we could achieve a space of alternated positions in our classrooms.

Epistemological decolonization within a nationalist framework would be in a cycle of reproduction. Take the case of Taiwan, for example. There were two waves of epistemological decolonization in Taiwan after WWII. The first is the de-Japanization project led by the KMT government 1950s in the post-colonial Cold War era, and the second is the de-Sinicization project led by DPP in the 1990s after the government uplifted the Martial Law. Both movements of epistemic decolonization attempt to dissolve ideological borders left by the previous ruling regime. But, by replacing the last epistemic construct with another one, the new government establishes another barricade through another nationalist ideology as well as its juridical and education system.

Any project of epistemic decolonization is not an easy task. It is not merely to overthrow the previous regime, to erase the existing epistemological system, or to rediscover the history of a particular point of history in the past. Any geographical place, such as Taiwan, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, China, Africa, or any other region, is, in fact, a zone of constant contact and power struggles, traversed by various ethnic groups and mixed cultures, through the long passages of time, with multiple forms of exchanges, commerce or battles. The mixture of diverse cultures sometimes is foreclosed by the ruling regimes through juridical institutions, educational policies, and bureaucratic implementations so that histories are narrative from a fixed nationalist perspective.

The real question we need to face here is the often-forgotten reality of the continual process of cultural syncretism in human history and the innate power struggle in all societies. We also tend to overlook the capacity of the regeneration of all cultures. It will not be contained by any abstract notion of a culture of a particular form. The project of epistemic decolonization suggests we must analyze critically how power concentration and social inequity are formed in local

communities. It asks through what institutional, juridical, and discursive apparatus, can this happen? How might devices of governmentality be syncretized and transformed into today's societies? Why are some groups of people and some diverse forms of culture rejected, excluded, and suppressed?

## Strategies of curricular decolonization

What are the implications that such a changed perspective offers for our pedagogical tasks in the classroom? As I discussed in the introduction, when confronted with parallel situations that concern them, my students began to work on projects that involved them but could not have been done in their own countries. These projects are varied, such as *The Invisible Politicized Roles of Nepali and Bangladeshi Migrants in West Bengal and North-east India*; *Sedition Act: Colonial Legacy in Postcolonial Malaysia*; *Zionist policies and their impact on the Identity and Citizenship of Palestinian Jerusalemite Women*; *The White Men's Burden: The Role of Whiteness in Excluding the "Other" from Belgian Society*; *Land Dispossession in South Africa: From Primitive Dispossession to Accumulation by Dispossession*. They could not have completed these projects at home either because they could not have formulated the problematics or because if they did the educational environment would have prevented them from pursuing such topics.

Critical pedagogy, on the one hand, encourages students to develop critical consciousness and to challenge the ideological borders established in their societies, such as racism, sexism, developmentalism, capitalism, that are otherwise taken for granted. Trans-local Inter-Asian cultural studies, on the other hand, could offer opportunities for students to go beyond their national boundaries, to be exposed to parallel situations through group discussions, and to look for geopolitical and geo-historical connections.

In addition to classroom discussions and MA/Ph.D. research projects, I also noticed that trans-local and multidisciplinary joint research projects would provide researchers opportunities to facilitate their students to participate in a more extensive network.

I want to share here several strategic practices of curricula decolonization.

First, bringing more films and documentaries into classroom discussions would help a lot to enable students to understand different perspectives shared by artists and activists. Just like working closely with NGOs and activists, studying documentaries and films also bring us to the frontline of struggles. In recent decades, the film festivals and documentary festival address the pressing issues emerging around the world, such as Malaysian Freedom Film Festival, Taiwan International Documentary Film Festival, Salaya International Documental Film Festival in Thailand, Active Vista International Human Rights Film Festival in Manila, Hanoi International Film Festival, Human Rights Human Dignity Int'l Film Festival in Yangon, Cambodia International Film Festival in Phnom Penh, Jeonju International Film Festival, etc. We could also encourage our students to practice documentary filmmaking through their process of thesis writing to experiment with multi-formed knowledge production.

Second, encourage various joint research projects organized by and among students from different countries to provide channels of collaboration outside of the classrooms. We encourage students to form research project groups. One example is the digital archive project collaborated by local students and international students from the MA and Ph.D. programs, titled "Conflict, Justice, Decolonization: Critical Studies of Inter-Asian Society" (CJD). To me, the achievement of this CJD platform is multifaceted. (1) It provides a platform for graduate students to participate in our research project and a space for co-learning through the digital research archive. (2) Through the mentoring of Ph.D. students, Master's students learn how to collect data and write articles. (3) They establish a sharing platform for research resources. (4) The platform strengthens the international academic network. From 2018 to 2019, there were 55 articles published on CJD. NCTU students participating in CJD include those from Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the



Philippines, India, Spain, Belgium, Poland, Palestine, South Africa, Hong Kong, Mainland China, and Taiwan. We also accept the submission of articles by students from other universities and other countries (see <http://iics.blog.nctu.edu.tw/>). Another example is the organization of the theatre workshop, “Where the People Are? Workshop on People’s Theatre in Inter-Asian Society” in 2018. A collaboration team formed by local and international students invited more than 30 people’s theatre practitioners and scholars from 8 countries across Northeast and Southeast Asia and Africa to participate and hosted a documenta.

Third, interdisciplinary, inter-university, and trans-local joint research projects that complicate university education and move the university beyond the walls. ICCS had launched a five-year joint-research project since 2018 on the general theme “Conflict, Justice, and Decolonization: Critical Studies in Inter-Asian Societies.” This project involves 36 scholars across universities, with diverse disciplinary backgrounds, including sociology, anthropology, economic history, political philosophy, the history of thought, material history, gender studies, discourse analysis, and artistic practice. In adjacent to this macro-project, ICCS also initiated a trans-national and cross-local joint research project on the theme: “Migration, Logistics and Unequal Citizens in Contemporary Global Context.” The topics of this GHI include (1) Conditions of Migration and Precarious Lives; (2) Geo-Economic-Political Zoning Politics, Global Logistics, and Local Infrastructure Initiatives; (3) Theoretical Issues Concerning the Questions of Citizenship Politics as well as the Increasing Cases of Contemporary Unequal Citizens and Modern Slavery.

This joint research project involves 35 researchers from 12 international research centers. The research team meets twice a year, hosted by different partner institutes. We organize workshops that allow researchers to share their on-going project, work with local researchers as well as local NGOs on migration and refugees related issues, and field trips to historical sites on the theme of migration. Through the process of cross-local collaboration, the research team can learn more about the local situations related to the precarious lives of the migrant workers and refugees, as well as how NGOs and artistic groups from different societies challenge the unfavorable juridical conditions and reach out to deal with these problems. The students of this network also get the opportunity to meet scholars with similar research agendas and present their research projects on occasions such as a summer school.

Fourth, summer school or winter camps on thematic issues that attract graduate students from around the world to share their research project. In the past decades, we have organized several five-day summer schools and winter camps on the theme of “Conflict and Justice: Precarious Bodies in Inter-Asia Societies,” “Toward Decolonizing Cold War Knowledge: Facing Contemporary Border Politics,” “Artistic Intervention and Social Critique: A Dialogue in the Inter-Asian Context.” On each occasion, students from different parts of the world gathered together with their projects and spent one week together in classroom discussions or on the field trips. By the end of the week, they all became good friends and would stay in touch in their future careers.

These strategic practices of working with NGO/activists/documentary filmmakers, encouraging auto-organized student research projects. This means establishing trans-local joint research platforms, together with the winter camps and summer schools, to exercise a form of curricular decolonization. A decolonization with the university beyond the walls and beyond the borders.

## Notes

1. The May 1998 riots were triggered by economic problems under the impact of the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis. The mass unemployment, shortage of food, and an increase in the price of gasoline and electricity led to agitated demonstrations and then massed violence. Different groups of mobs in Medan, Jakarta, and Surakarta attacked police posts, destroyed shopping malls, looted and burned shops owned by Chinese Indonesians, raped, and murdered ethnic Chinese women. The death toll was around 11,888, and more than one thousand women were raped.

2. A comparable example, the constitution of the federalist politics in Malaysia explicitly privileges the Malays by guaranteeing particular positions of Malays and the Malay language (Article 153) and favoring the adoption of Islam as the national religion (article 3), as well as establishing a Council of Rulers, composed of ethnic Malay Sultans (Article 338, 181). (Arakaki, 2009, p. 81; qt. Pietsch, 2014, p. 306)
3. *Pengkhianatan G 30S-PKI* was written and directed by Arifin C. Noer, and produced by G. Dwipayana. Suharto's New Order government sponsored the production of this 4-hour docudrama movie. This docudrama re-enacted the event and interpreted the September 30 Movement as a coup d'état organized by the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI).

## Disclosure statement

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

## Notes on contributors

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