

Chapter Title: Decolonizing the Archive in World Society at the LSHTM: Disentanglement and Trans-Mediation of Coloniality in Library Services

Chapter Author(s): Michelangelo Paganopoulos

Book Title: Educating Otherwise

Book Subtitle: Contexts, Interventions and Radical Possibilities of Anthropological Learning

Book Editor(s): Sarah Winkler-Reid, Caroline Gatt, Tim Ingold, Elsayed E. Abdelhamid, Soumhya Venkatesan, Simone Dennis, Mariya Ivancheva, Cris Shore, Cynthia Sear, Andrew Dawson

Published by: Berghahn Books. (2026)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.38433837.26>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at



org/terms. This book is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>. Funding is provided by Association of Social Anthropologists.



Berghahn Books is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Educating Otherwise*

Chapter 20

Decolonizing the Archive in World Society at the LSHTM

Disentanglement and Trans-Mediation of Coloniality in Library Services

Michelangelo Paganopoulos



Introduction

This chapter looks at the project of ‘Decolonization’ at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) focusing on the effort to ‘decolonize’ the LSHTM Library Services, Archives and Collections. It positions libraries as *eigenstructures* in ‘world society’ theory, theorizing the library space as a ‘third’ ethnographic space, situated in the mediatory ground where world history reciprocates with the school’s institutional vocation according to the times – including its relation to history and its own past. In doing so, it highlights the paradox in the project’s idealism: to break away from the institution’s own history as a means of redefining its current vocation in the medical world and educational impact in the emerging world society. The chapter reflects on the future of this paradox in relation to the challenges rooted in LSHTM’s colonial past, and the wider recent technological opening of Library Services (LS) to the global stage. It further investigates new methods of disentanglement from coloniality emerging from the trans-mediation and disentanglement of LS and the Archive catalogue. This includes emerging new methods such as foregrounding, revaluation, and reclassification, aiming to decentralize how research outputs are disseminated and represented as part of LSHTM’s vocation in the medical world. Yet, the chapter also questions the efficacy of the project as a ‘token’: a replicated superficial representation of a circulating system of past biases (or *dressage*) that have taken new forms – rather than *addressing* the issue of coloniality in its pres-

ent uniform(s). Furthermore, as the chapter will show, the question of trans-mediation as intervention is not simply a matter of representation, but when reversed it becomes a question of neocolonization of the world society by new forms of worldings emerging from previous ones.

This chapter is paired with another chapter entitled ‘Modelling the New Social’, and published in the ASA collection of essays, *How to Live Through a Pandemic* (Paganopoulos 2024). Both chapters were the result of *online fieldwork*, referring to ethnography conducted online at the institution of LSHTM focusing on the trans-mediation of research models during the pandemic closure (2019–22). This chapter was written at the time the author was working on various tasks with the Decolonization Group of the LSHTM Library, including digitizing archival materials and participating in events such as a strategy launch event that took place at the LSHTM Library on 6 July 2021, entitled ‘EDI Strategy Launch Event: Decolonizing Library and Archives’. Much of the material is based on email exchanges, meetings and online links kindly offered by the professional services and user support services librarian of the LSHTM, the school’s archivist, and the library’s collection services and acquisitions manager. Accordingly, the author wishes to thank the above for their contribution and support during this difficult period. The author also wishes to acknowledge his colleagues as part of his own experiences in working with the Decolonization Group at the LSHTM library.

Libraries as Structural *Eigenstructures* of ‘World Society’

Libraries and their archival historical records *mirror* ‘world society’. They are integral parts of educational institutions through which knowledge is obtained, articulated, tested, disseminated and trans-mediated as information to the world. In this context, libraries function as intermediary gateways between the global sphere and local institutions and communities, circulating knowledge through their networks and opening pathways for communication and cooperation. Furthermore, libraries form and are being formed via extended and evolving stratification systems referred to as ‘island societies’ (Meyer et al. 1997: 165), ‘small world networks’ (Stichweh 2019: 522) or ‘small islands’ (Downey et al. 2020). These demonstrate a ‘compatibility of globality and locality, of global connectedness and local situatedness’ (Stichweh 2007: 138). In anthropological terms, library institutions also formulate an emerging ‘third ethnographic space’, opening of the ‘field’ from a singular to multiple fields and departmentalizations (Fischer 2018; Marcus 1995: 95–117). This opening to world society is structurally synthesized out of the dialectics between two

opposite movements: on the one hand, a force *from above*, referring to the external impact of world institutions and the media on a local level via the implementation and normalization of globalized overlapping processes of isomorphism, structuration, diffusion, standardization, and internal decoupling, and the quality and degree of such interventions according to ‘cosmopolitan’ values, scientific discoveries and transnational networks (Meyer et al. 1997: 144–81; see also Buzan 2017; Stivachtis and McKeil 2018: 1–10). On the other hand, there is a countermovement of empirical knowledge emerging *from below* upwards of individual ‘actors’ (such as NGOs) carrying their own cultural values and agency, which dialectically encounters the downward pressure of world institutions from above in both positive and detrimental ways (Downey et al. 2020: 1–22).

The dialectics played between the two opposite movements of circulation of knowledge instigate further changes in educational and scientific institutions, of which libraries are integral departments, by either actively replicating or ‘resisting’ established hegemonic structures through isomorphic processes of globalization and their replication into new forms as part of their evolving ‘restructuring’ (Downey et al. 2020: 1–22; Martinelli 2007: 425–42; Meyer et al. 1997: 160–63; Meyer and Jepperson 2000: 100–120; Wittmann 2014: 193–205). They create variations of *glocal dynamics*, synthesized out of the dialectical intensification between internal (local/national) and external (global/transnational) spaces. In the fluid environment of *glocality*, library institutions hence constitute a middle ground functioning as ‘*eigenstructures* of world society’, referring to ‘the core structures of the emerging system of world society . . . which bridge regional differences in world society . . . as an indicator of the structural complexity of world society’ (Stichweh 2019: 520). The informal (private) horizontal organization of such institutions dynamically encounters their external (public) formal engagement in everyday life from which the internal movement of knowledge and personnel is kept separated, or *hidden* from public view, only to be replicated in representations in a flexible and adaptable manner with other external institutions as networked ‘connectivity, connectedness, interrelatedness’ (Stichweh 2007: 139; also 2019: 516).

The multifaceted dialectical dynamics of structuration and isomorphism, known as ‘restructuring’, set against the backdrop of diffusion and decoupling, construct an ‘archaeology’ of knowledge in Foucault’s (1961) perspective. This framework interrogates who holds authority over the dissemination of global knowledge and our roles within it, emphasizing the dichotomy of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Amartya Sen (1992) discussed how inherited forms of inequality give birth to further categorizations, on the basis of which more separations (and discriminations) are built:

‘[T]he importance of the distinction between seeking equality in different spaces relates ultimately to the nature of human diversity. It is because we are so deeply diverse that equality in one space frequently leads to inequality in other spaces’ (ibid.: 117). Furthermore, it could be argued that institutional libraries of the European world (sites that evolved from the monastery to the university and, nowadays, global institutions/corporations) replicate a circular colonialist ‘*raisonne of knowledge*’ based on the classification and evaluation of knowledge in terms of Christianized ‘modern’ and non-Christian so-called ‘premodern’ societies (de Carteau 1988: 212–25). This circulation of history is integral in circulating network systems, which, via the circulation of information reproduce a mapping of *their* ‘world’ according to the standards of the dominant status quo.

As such, libraries have been modern sites of both ‘allochronism’ in Fabian’s (1983) postcolonialist terms in representing ‘history’ as a means of supporting the ideology of the status quo, while technologically enhancing existing hegemonic structures in new emergent forms of institutionalized knowledge distributed and represented in terms of *worldings*. By this term, Spivak refers to the ‘imperial [re]production’, mapping and reordering of the ‘world’ in terms of the uses of the (English) language in ways that recycle and amplify existing structures of coloniality in an ever-evolving ‘colonized space’ (Spivak 1985: 247–72). The problems at hand are related to both methodology and ethics. As libraries are part of the total institution of the university, internally closed but externally open to change according to the power relations that govern it, can their ‘colonized space’ magically transform into an all-inclusive and equal ‘world space’ in how knowledge is obtained and distributed? Indeed, as Adebisi (2019) wonders, following the influential writings of Frantz Fanon: ‘How illogical is it that the structure we are attempting to decolonize is the structure we are attempting to use to decolonize?’ (Crilly and Everitt citing Adebisi, 2021 XXII).

‘Decolonizing’ the LSHTM Library Services and the Archive

The London School of Hygiene was founded in October 1899 by Sir Patrick Manson with the support of the Colonial Office under the name ‘London School of Tropical Medicine’ (Acheson and Poole 1991; Chakrabarti 2014; Cook 1992; Haynes 2001; Hirsch 2022; Johnson 2010

Manson-Bahr 1956; Worboys 1988; Wilkinson and Hardy 2001). The organization promoted public health policies and health programmes conducted under the Colonial Office in West and East Africa, India, and other areas of the colonial world. As part of this initiative, the school’s archival

records, collection of photographs and other materials sourced from the field were systematically rearranged to showcase the positive contributions of the institution in public health, particularly in the battle against malaria and other epidemiological diseases. This included the establishment of vaccination programmes and the rebuilding of sanitary housing in local communities. However, despite the idealistic aspirations to elevate the school's global image in line with the modern times, this endeavour had an unintended consequence. It resulted both in the concealment and disclosure of colonialist legacies and biases. It was an outright attempt to rewrite history serving the interest of the colonialism alongside public health. It led to a process of 'dismemberment' of the past, via the editing of archival records and their manipulation in the representation of historical material that dressed (rather than addressing) the impact of colonial institutions in the Commonwealth and beyond (see also Elkins 2015: 852–68; and Lowry 2019, online). In respect to the London School of Hygiene's archive, Cranna and Hirsch reflected:

British colonial governments undertook every effort to maintain control over colonial records, wilfully destroying archival documents that reflected badly on colonial governments and refusing colonized populations access to politically sensitive files. A great number of files pertaining to former British colonies are still held by the UK National Archives (TNA) in Kew, rather than by respective national archives in former colonies. (Cranna and Hirsch 2021: 250)

This process of 'dismembering' and displacing the past further privileged 'whiteness' by creating a facade that promoted the European status quo in terms of its almost exclusively military European staff intervening in local communities in the name of 'science'. In this context, the original LSTM Archive failed to directly address or assess the issue of coloniality. By merging information, accompanied by selected and often staged photographic records, the official archive obscured (rather than showcased) biased remnants of the imperial colonial power structures, simultaneously allowing them the time to transform into new emerging structures and policies, many of which endure to this day. Cranna and Hirsch called this process 'entanglement' with the military, as one of the strategies that enhanced institutionalized racism in both education and public health:

For example, in order to guarantee jobs to all LSTM graduates, the Colonial Office amalgamated the Colonial Medical Services of its West African colonies to create the West African Medical Service (WAMS) in 1902. The foundation of LSTM and the WAMS are detailed in a Colonial Office memorandum, kept at TNA. However, service in the WAMS was barred to individuals of non-European descent, making it the first openly racist UK government

department. The school archives omit a history of this policy, which was conceived to directly benefit the school and its students. Only by linking documents from two physically distinct archive institutions and putting the creation of the WAMS and of LSTM in relation to one another, was I able to foreground the school's *entanglements* with racism and white supremacy. (Cranna and Hirsch 2021: 251)

This entanglement of archives with military information rejected or diminished the impact of non-European resources in public health matters. It projected upon colonies a 'science' that was (and still tends to be) exclusively, ideologically and ahistorically associated with a European Renaissance (Appadurai 1996; Asad 1973; Goody 2010, 2012; Paganopoulos 2018; Tambiah 1990). In this crude manner, the medical archive became a so-called 'site of modernity' carrying an ahistorically colonialist concept of 'scientific universalism', ahistorically associated with European culture, from which the non-white, non-Christian, non-English-speaking world was firmly excluded. Accordingly, the archival records regarding the history of the institution often diminished the importance and impact of non-European institutions, medical systems, and/or individuals involved in medicine on a local level to the point of discrimination or outright racist attitudes. The result was that the precious local expertise, along with non-European researchers and established medical practices, were entirely overlooked, repressed, replicated without credit, or forcefully removed from historical records. This was a loss of true science, of missing opportunities to understand alternative medical systems and medicines that had existed in 'Other' places for centuries.

By 1924, the school had added the word 'Hygiene' to its title, denoting a first effort to break away from its colonialist foundation. Accordingly, funding received by the London School of Hygiene was transferred from the Colonial Office to the Commonwealth Office. This was part of modernizing its medical interventions and vocation into a postcolonial British institution, focusing on promoting public health, hygiene, and eugenics in the Commonwealth and the Balkans. This institutional transformation gradually transpired in the wake of the dissolution of the Great Empires and the rise of modern states in Africa and around the world. It could be contended that this was a final attempt to 'salvage' whatever remained from the remnants of the British Empire. The goal was to provide it with a new appearance, a fresh makeover. This paradoxical modern phenomenon in the history of the LSH, which sought to break free from its own historical context, continued throughout the 1940s and then on to the 1970s. By the 1960s, the school had directed its attention towards 'Tropical Medicine', which referred to the geographical regions (Tropics) of the former empire. In alignment with the ethos of the postwar period, this

initiative echoed the rising public critique of the time concerning the economic, historical and ideological impacts of colonialism worldwide. It was also a renewed strategy to reconnect with the ‘world’ after severing ties with its own colonial past.

By the turn of the century, the Library Services and archives of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine confronted the colonial past not simply by acknowledging its existence and raising awareness, but as a means of reflective intervention in the emerging new world society. In this context, ‘decolonization’ signifies the process of disentangling LSHTM from its historical connections with the Colonial Office, with the goal of dismantling all remaining structures and biases that persist today by creating innovative methods and tools for self-reflection and restructuring. Regarding the archive record and LS of LSHTM, the processes of foregrounding and disentanglement involve uncovering silenced or omitted records, such as: ‘hesitations, sentences removed from previous meeting minutes, contradictions found in letters and reports, and pages missing from departmental collections’ (Cranna and Hirsch 2021: 250). This ‘rhetoric turn into reforms’ extends to the ‘systemic changes’ required from World Health Organisations and the way they have been organising both knowledge and personnel (Khan et al. 2021: 1). It is a painstaking ‘unearthing’ process aimed at further decentralizing sources and resources relating to how they are collected, processed, categorized, highlighted, and shared as public knowledge. The second aspect of this change in the institute’s vocation is ‘trans-mediation’, by which we refer to new methods used to address coloniality by ‘engaging with decolonial practices in museums and archives using research-creation and collaborative media production, and an *intervention* to provoke consideration of new possibilities for the digital in museum practice that moves beyond the replica . . . as a generative force shifting theory and practice’ (Turner and Hennessy 2025). Conversely, to ‘decolonize’ refers to ‘a *paradigm shift* from a culture of exclusion and denial to the making of space for other political philosophies and knowledge systems. It’s a cultural shift to think more widely about why common knowledge is what it is, and in doing so adjusting cultural perceptions and power relations in real and significant ways’ (Keele University 2018, cited in Crilly and Everitt 2021: XXI, my emphasis).

The work of decolonizing the library is about understanding how the past has informed the present but must also be about envisaging a better future, even if how to achieve it isn’t always clear . . . thinking and acting on the colonial legacies that impact libraries and knowledge production . . . The library . . . has a powerful role at the centre of the institution, and must

either step up to support decolonization, or continue to prop up the status quo. (Crilly and Everitt 2021 XXV and XXVI)

The principles associated with the term ‘decolonization’ hold the promise of reshaping future research and the archive in ways that could alter history. At the heart of this vision for equity and equality within a balanced world society are the advancing technologies of communication and representation utilized in the promotion of innovative research. The swift advancement of new software and online resources has significantly transformed the quality of Library Services in the distribution and utilization of digitized data, facilitating the opening of research on a global platform through international funding organizations and world institutions. Inevitably, the digitization of LS and the transformation of the library space from a physical to a digitized online *representation* of space/knowledge affect the way information is consumed by users. These changes support a new but rapidly emerging industry of knowledge, played out between author rights, institutional rights, and publishing restrictions in the contested, mediatory library field(s).

Open Scholarship

The opening of Library Services onto the world stage increased its transmediating pace during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the wider global politic of working and studying world government schemes ‘from home’ (Paganopoulos 2024: 80). In this new context, the pandemic enhanced the development of real-time, online institutional and university repositories, global subject repositories, and online hubs (such as *Human Commons* and *Project Muse*), as well as the increased public use of independent online libraries (such as the *National Library of Medicine*) and emerging publishing online platforms (such as the *Janeway*), intertwined with previous academic social networks (such as *Mendeley*, *ResearchGate* and *Academia.edu*, among many other platforms). The swift paradigm evolution of technology occurred concurrently with the increased use and importance of online research identities (ORCID) and additional modifications in publishing regulations and licensing. For instance, the establishment of the ‘Creative Commons’ licensing for Open Access, going back to the 2000s, significantly opened access to research outputs worldwide, instigating new networks of information that have now completely surpassed the classical total institution model of the library and/or university. Furthermore, fast-paced online, real-time platforms of representation and communication sped up the mobilization of data and resources between researchers

and their respective institutions, via new networks and new emerging institutions, formulating new superstructures out of previous modern educational systems (for example, by forming real-time library networks expanding beyond the university or the nation based on research focus and research impact). These radical technological changes in how knowledge is trans-mediated and consumed reveal a flourishing online environment of networks which has popularized the once restricted field of ‘science’ to the evolving world – or at least to and for those with internet access.

In this context, Evans (2023) highlighted an affinity in goals and barriers between ‘Open Scholarship’ and ‘Decolonization’ as integral in the ‘Framework of Open and Reproducible Research Teaching’ (FORRT) used for restructuring the curriculum. Conversely, ‘Open Scholarship’ came to be ‘an umbrella term referring to the endeavour to improve openness, integrity, social justice, diversity, equity, inclusivity and accessibility in all areas of scholarly activities’ (Parsons et al. 2022: 312–18). These values resonate the vocation of world institutions, such as UNESCO’s (2021) ‘recommendations’ towards opening the field of science, echoing LSHTM’s specific vocation in its mission ‘to improve health and health equity in the UK and worldwide; working in partnership to achieve excellence in public and global health research, education and translation of knowledge into policy and practice’.¹ Both UNESCO and LSHTM call for integrity, inclusivity, collaboration and awareness of the ‘power dynamics’ still played in this emerging field(s) of knowledge.

These rapid changes evolving around the relationship between the Decolonizing project and Open Scholarship, instigated by the rapid rise of emerging technologies of representation and categorization in LS, must be further investigated as a ‘third’ ethnographic space to pragmatically contribute to the decentralization of the circulation and reproduction of knowledge balancing between polarized approach strategies of ‘decolonization’ across university life. The dramatic changes in archives and LS define the orientation and open future potential of the Decolonization project in remaking (rather than rewriting) history. According to the emerging ethics of a new ‘world society’, emphasizing diversity and equity over previous hegemonic and homogeneous processes of isomorphism and structuration, new technologies of representation should be challenging inequity and inequalities in terms of enhancing the active involvement of communities in research in the production and reproduction of knowledge by ‘opening’ access to the networks that circulate it. According to Evans, the prospects offered by advancing technologies in representation and communication, which are opening LS to a global audience, could ideally ‘maximize accessibility of work through more

thorough consideration of power, geographical differences, and diversity in knowledge sources' (Evans 2023: 24).

Decolonizing the Library Space

Answering to this urgent political call, the Decolonizing Curriculum Working Group of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine started on a volunteer basis in 2019. It is an ongoing project divided into two main areas of development: one focusing on changes in the academic role of LSHTM in terms of research and teaching, and the other on developing new digital and online tools for supporting 'Technologically Enhanced Learning' (TEL) as a means of opening access to research and decolonizing the curriculum. The two groups engage in four main group activities. Each group is overseen by a 'Facilitator' on an annual rotating basis: the Evaluation and Metrics group, the Staff Training for Tutors group, the Student Inclusion and Feedback group, and the Events Organization and Publicity group. Library Services are further divided into Archives, Collections, and User & Information Services, each with a given task that corresponds to their role in opening research and accessibility. Below, I briefly look at how some of these overlapping tasks are associated with each group.

Library Services belong to the Evaluation and Metrics group, with responsibility for evaluating the progress of work being done in the library as a whole and raising any issues in the Decolonizing Curriculum Working Group [email exchange with 'Facilitator', the Professional and User Support Services Librarian on 13 April 2022]. Their role covers five areas or 'principles': (a) Cataloguing shifting practices to raise awareness regarding biased and unbiased discriminatory everyday uses of terms and categories, and 'be mindful of the normalization of [such] terminology and language' (Cranna and Hirsch 2021: 256); (b) Archival shifting practices include 'Putting the emphasis more on people, the people in the institution rather than just the 'significant' [sic] people . . . 'significant records' the records of the powerful' (Cranna 2021); (c) Dissemination referring to 'critical engagement' to reflect upon and recontextualize contested histories, focusing on 'how decolonizing principles/content can be included' (Cranna and Hirsch 2021: 259); (d) Inclusivity to ensure openness and equality in terms of mobilization and accessibility to the school's resources, and diversity in recruitment in response to coloniality; and (e) Education, referring to training-based resources and software provided by and to other networks.

Alongside these developments in Library Services, the LSHTM Archives and Collections use various overlapping methods, including *foregrounding* and *disseminating* the archive, to uncover, recover (where possible), recategorize, and redistribute updated ('decolonized') narratives via the digitization and dissemination of archival material as a means of promoting it ('foregrounding'). This dialectical mirroring approach offers a fresh perspective for examining the past according to the present. It has evolved into a mechanism for establishing new global networking structures, extending its mission beyond the Commonwealth to a worldwide audience. It encompasses the organized mobilization of resources and personnel on a global scale. Such an expansion necessitates a thoughtful reassessment of the curriculum, the exploration of new sources, and a research focus that is approached in an 'unbiased' manner. This process calls for collaboration between the archive and collections in terms of 'how we can explore absences through our existing collections, as well as considering the practical steps we can take to address the structures of racism within the archives' (Victoria Cranna's *LSHTM Alumni Blog*, 29 September 2021a).

The project initiated by the LSHTM archivist, Victoria Cranna, aimed to directly disrupt and confront existing narratives rooted in the school's colonial legacy and its entanglement with the West African Medical Service (WAMS). Accordingly, dissemination follows foregrounding in requiring a 'critical engagement' with past colonial narratives by focusing on 'how decolonizing principles/content can be included' while raising awareness regarding 'the imbalance of power inherent in the colonial encounter' (Cranna and Hirsch 2021: 259). The paradigm shift of 'decolonization' of the archive hence centralized on shifting the narrative orientation to confront coloniality by 'telling a different story [in coordination] with our collections' (Cranna 2021). The aim was to reinforce the legitimacy of sources derived from both minorized scientists within the school and external local 'informants' and communities, whose contributions may have been largely ignored or, even worse, their ownership taken away from them or distorted according to the dominant ideology of the status quo.

According to the Head of Collection Services and Acquisitions Manager at LSHTM, another set of techniques for reorganizing and representing library materials includes revaluation and reclassification. This includes changing the classic Barnard library classification system of Library Collections (printed and online) to real-time online reading lists. In doing so, the Collections team of the LSHTM focused on two tasks: on the one hand, they updated search tools for the trans-mediation of online catalogues and real-time reading lists; and on the other, they incorporated users' feedback in these revaluations, in a long process of reclassifica-

tion by recalibrating the legitimacy and ownership of the material, and returning it to its true owners – as much as this was possible (see also Meda 2020: 88–103; Harvey and Russell-Mundine 2019: 789–808). The reflective aim of the Collections team was to ‘raise awareness of this at Library Services and school-wide levels and support the Decolonization group. There was also, of course, the revision of the Barnard classification scheme, which included decolonization . . . many subject headings and hierarchical structures are still weighted in a very much racist and sexist past’ (email correspondence with Head of Collections, LSHTM Library, 13 April 2022).

An aspect of this painstaking work includes the revaluation of the use of language both in the interpretation and categorization of knowledge gathered from the field, in terms of ‘worlding’, referring to the mapping and ordering of the ‘world’ according to colonialist and postcolonialist narratives (Spivak 1985: 247–72). Ironically, although the current world-wide opening of library services via Open Research schemes, such as Open Scholarship and Open Access, was meant to offer free open access to digitized archival material, the impact of publishing groups and funding agreements has contributed to *widening* the gap between the circulation of material written and published exclusively in English and the rest of the non-English-speaking world. Here, the issue of representing archival ‘world’ knowledge extends to pragmatic issues, as already discussed in Anthropology and Cultural Studies. For example, worlding echoes the long-standing methodological issue of *translation* in Anthropology with respect to one’s positioning towards ‘informants’ and specific ways of processing, interpreting and translating the ‘field’, as well as with respect to the (im)possibility of translation as an ethnographic ‘third’ field by itself (Spivak 1993, 2005, 2010; and in da Col and Graeber 2011; Hanks and Severi 2014; Odabaei 2022; Taylor 2022 – among others). The underlying dilemma is whether it is possible to readdress these sources by recontextualizing them as focal grounds for further research, or by simply historically acknowledging biased discrepancies without taking any further action (Victoria Cranna’s *LSHTM Alumni Blog*, 29 September 2021a: Endnote ii. See also Cranna and Hirsch 2021: 250, 253, citing Hartman 2008).

However, at the same time, the rapid trans-mediation from the physical library space to the virtual and digital overlapping spaces (especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, with the rise of home education as opposed to on campus) has raised both ethical and practical issues regarding the opening of Library Services beyond the physical limits of library space. Questions regarding equity with respect to the efficacy and politics behind the project (see also Ross-Hellauer et al. 2022) carry further implications in terms of replicating the same imbalances that decolonization

is meant to address, including the issues of translation, accessibility to sources (physical) and resources (online), funding to researchers from less privileged nations or non-English-speaking places, as well as questions over the process of dissemination and acknowledgement of research outputs as a means of developing equal and open collaboration between various agents and world institutions across the globe. This carries the dangerous ‘potential for open practices to perpetuate or extend existing inequalities, rather than promote collaborative knowledge development’ (Bahlai et al. 2019; Cole, Reichmann and Ross-Hellauer 2022).

One of the central underlying issues identified as problematic was the *place* of publications directly associated with the dominance of English-speaking institutions in the library space(s), physical or online. According to two statistical evaluations in 2019 and 2021, ‘only 26% of citations had a place of publication, [of which] 67% were published in Europe and 32% in North America’ (Cranna 2021). In terms of collections, 97 per cent of the books had a place of publication in the records, of which 60 per cent were published in Europe and 31 percent in North America, while Africa was a place ‘*published about*’ by publishers from Europe (2/3) and North America (1/3). According to the Head of Collections, ‘These findings were very similar to what we discovered in the collection of e-books’. E-journals and e-books exhibit a comparable trend, with a total of about six and a half thousand titles. ‘From all our regional packages that we subscribe to, all of the publisher headquarters were based in Europe and North America, primarily America [*sic*, US] and the Netherlands, . . . [and] only six publishers had offices in Africa compared to thirteen in Europe and twenty-one in North America.’

Bibliometrics indicate that the swift advancement of online library systems extends their networking beyond individual institutions into the broader online ‘world’. This expansion has led to an increased prevalence of English-speaking institutions from the United States and other countries, which have begun to dominate the language of publications elsewhere. For instance, although MDPI is based in Switzerland, its articles are published in English and are funded to be made ‘Gold’ Open Access. Additionally, the growth of the US-based Springer across Europe and Asia exemplifies the recolonization of the academic landscape. These findings prompt methodological and ethical inquiries regarding the practical effectiveness of the expanding initiatives linked to the recent ‘decolonization’ project. The metrics affirm the ever-increasing dominance of English-speaking institutions and publishers in the rapidly circulating ‘free’ (neoliberal) market of education. It serves large English-speaking ‘global’ publishers and their institutionalized audiences, while smaller national publishing houses face closure. According to the metrics offered

to me by the Head of LSHTM Collections: ‘59% of citations were for journal content, [of which] 22% were published by *Elsevier*, which accounts for the largest number being published in the Netherlands . . . 10% of all citations were for the *Lancet* and the *BMJ*.’ An additional issue here is the language used on online platforms for discovering journals online; for example, *Sherpa/Romeo* or *DOAJ* [Directory for Open Access Journals] is limited to English titles, with limited access to non-English journals and sources from non-English institutions. Furthermore, the place of publication tends to be the United States and the European North, while contributions from the Global South in ‘global’ knowledge are limited by comparison.

Finally, the emergent ‘audit culture’ and bureaucratization of the academic world (Strathern 2000) raise further issues of accountability in research in an increasingly bureaucratized marketed environment in which quantity (i.e. number of ‘publications’ in English by whatever means necessary for increasing funding over measuring a research output’s ‘impact’ using online metrics as a means of evaluation) is preferred over quality, originality, methodology and integrity (Hutnyk 2020). The open educational market can be a toxic and harmful setting for research at its very foundation, as it fosters the replication of research outputs (which can be viewed as new forms of colonization) as a way to meet funding obligations within a bureaucratic network of information created in library systems. In addition, besides the methodological and ethical dilemmas that emerge from the transparency of Open Scholarship, there have been further calls to prioritize the integrity and quality of research and the availability of paid resources. This includes the increasing financial challenges faced by researchers from low-income countries, who may be disadvantaged due to their ‘minorized’ backgrounds, the lack of funding opportunities (see also Smith et al. 2021: 1123–43), or even the inability to write in English initially. Thus, the project of Decolonization is much more intricate and profound than merely representing history in a way that is convenient according to contemporary standards.

Conclusion

[H]istory cannot be undone, and so the possibilities of truly ‘decolonizing’ LSHTM’s archive are slim. A complete restructure of the existing catalogue might change the way in which users interact with the archive, but it would not be able to reverse epistemic power imbalances predicated on racist hierarchies and their ensuing consequences . . . The telling of critical, anti-colonial stories can showcase the true violence of colonial racism and white supremacy, and their entanglements with the development of European science [sic]. Indigenous agency [sic] can be reconstructed from archival frag-

ments, but no amount of decolonizing can change the past or the documentary traces that reveal the past. (Cranna and Hirsch 2021: 254)

Cranna and Hirsch acknowledge a certain futility in the predicament of ‘decolonization’ regarding the *pragmatic* efficacy of the project. Their dilemma echoes wider questions regarding ‘decolonization’ as ‘a superficial buzzword severed from its radical essence’ (Doherty, Madriaga and Joseph-Salisbury 2021: 233), which is ‘more about enactment than purpose?’ (Crilly and Everitt 2021: XXI). A number of authors have questioned the substantiated intentions behind Decolonization as a smoke screen for ‘open washing’ coloniality, which still exists in the workplace and impacts all aspects of education and professional life (see also Doherty, Madriaga and Joseph-Salisbury 2021: 233–44; Gopal 2021: 873–99; Hall et al. 2021: 902–19; Parsons et al. 2022: 312–18; Shain et al. 2021: 920–36). In this context, certain critical scholars view the project as a somewhat superficial and tokenistic exchange that is implemented in a manner intended to ‘defer the need for more fundamental change’ (Crilly and Everitt 2021: XXIII; Shain et al. 2021). It is a postmodern irony that such an effort cannot escape from corresponding to coloniality, referring to the structurally *same* active remnants of colonialist idea(l)s and internal conscious and unconscious biases still undermining the project, while conveniently and superficially taking new online external forms from which decolonization ideally aims to break away. Furthermore, this ambiguity regarding the intentions and value of the project also carries repercussions in terms of ‘how colonial history and structures manifest racial discrimination in the workplace, and vows to revalue the experiences of minoritised people’ (Crilly and Everitt 2021: XXVIII). For example, an independent review focusing on ‘structural racism at LSHTM’, published in *The Guardian* on 13 December 2021, highlighted how coloniality is still at work in the workspace, where minority groups are ‘underrepresented’ at senior levels and ‘are more likely to be on short-term and fixed-term contracts than their white peers’. In fact, while addressing the report on 21 June 2023, the director of the London School of Hygiene, Liam Smith, conceded that these discrepancies ‘point to deeper, more structural problems within LSHTM that have negatively impacted the experiences of those within our organization’.²

Hence, this dilemma springs out of the ambiguity of the term ‘decolonization’ itself, echoing polarized views regarding ‘decolonial’ approaches, such as (re)building a record of so-called ‘alternate knowledge’, against harsher or ‘anti-colonial’ radicalization and disruption of the status quo throughout Higher Education (as in Arday, Belluigi and Thomas 2021: 298–313; Dawson 2020: 71–90; Evans 2023: 21–29; Shain et al. 2021: 920–31, among others). In this context, the project of Decolonization could

be criticized as an intentional *decoupling* strategy, replicating and reproducing *hidden* internal (private) hegemonic structures laying underneath the politically correct external (public) *appearance* of a well-constructed facade. Moreover, trans-mediation may not only be a mirror of a representation that replicates in reproducing coloniality in new emerging forms, but even worse, it may also constitute a process of *reversed* trans-mediation in that it not only maintains but even produces new emerging forms of worldings dressed up as ‘decolonization’. This reproduction and dressing up of new forms of coloniality may require a complete dismantling of the educational system and funding networks to enable a redevelopment from the ground upwards within emergent new world institutions. This overview substantiates that for the project to be truly successful it will also require a change of attitudes towards building a new educational system, one that both formulates and corresponds to the rapid evolutions taking place in the emergent ‘world society’ before our eyes, and the rising new world order.

Dr. Michelangelo Paganopoulos (‘Global Inquiries and Social Theory Research Group’, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ton Duc Thang University, Vietnam) has a long-standing commitment to interdisciplinary research in the arts and humanities. He has worked as a lecturer and visiting tutor in Social Anthropology, with a number of publications, and has participated in conferences and panels in the UK, as well as Europe, Vietnam and India.

NOTES

1. Retrieved 16 July 2025 from <https://doi.org/10.54677/MNMH8546>.
2. Article in *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/dec/13/structural-racism-at-london-school-of-hygiene-tropical-medicine-finds-report>; LSHTM director’s response here <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/organisation/governance/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/racial-equality/independent-review> [both URLs last accessed 16 July 2025].

REFERENCES

- Acheson, R., and P. Poole. 1991. ‘The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine: A Child of Many Parents’, *Medical History* 35(4): 385–408.
- Adebisi, F.I. 2019. ‘Why I Say Decolonization Is Impossible’. Blog post. Retrieved 30 January 2026 from <https://folukeafrica.com/why-i-say-decolonisation-is-impossible/>.

- Appadurai, A. 1996, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
- Arday, J., D. Belluigi and D. Thomas. 2021. 'Attempting to Break the Chain: Reimagining Inclusive Pedagogy and Decolonizing the Curriculum within the Academy', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 53(3): 298–313.
- Asad, T. 1973. *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. New York: Humanity Books.
- Bahlai, C., et al. 2019. 'Open Science Isn't Always Open to All Scientists', *American Scientist* 107(2) : 78–82.
- Buzan, B. 2017. 'Revisiting World Society', *International Politics* (July). DOI: 10.1057/s41311-017-0065-5.
- Chakrabarti, P. 2014. *Medicine and Empire, 1600–1960*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cole, N.L., S. Reichmann and T. Ross-Hellauer. 2022 (March). 'Global Thinking. ON-MERRIT recommendations for maximizing equity in open and responsible research'. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6276752>.
- Cook, G.C. 1992. *From the Greenwich Hulks to Old St. Pancras: A History of Tropical Disease in London*. London: Athlone Press.
- Cranna, V., and L. Hirsch. 2021. 'Decolonizing the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine's Archives Service, Archives and Records', *The Journal of the Archives and Records Association* 42(3): 248–65.
- Cranna, V. 2021(a), 'Decolonising the LSHTM archives', *LSHTM Alumni Blog*, 29 September. Available at: <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/alumni/blogs/2021/dec-olonising-lshtm-archives> (Accessed: 30 January 2026).
- Cranna, V. 2021(b). 'EDI Strategy Launch Event: Decolonizing Library and Archives'. LSHTM, 6 July. Decolonising Library & Archives (Breakout Room).
- Crilly, J. and R. Everitt. 2021, 'Introduction', in J. Crilly and R. Everitt (eds), *Narrative Expansions: Interpreting Decolonisation in Academic Libraries*, Facet Publishing, London: I–XXIV.
- Da Col, G., and D. Graeber. 2011. 'The Return of Ethnographic Theory', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 1(1): VI–XXXV.
- Dawson, M.C. 2020. 'Rehumanizing the University for an Alternative Future: Decolonization, Alternative Epistemologies, and Cognitive Justice', *Identities* 27(1): 71–90.
- De Certeau, M. 1988. *The Writing of History*. Trans. Tom Conley. New York: Columbia UP.
- Doharty, N., M. Madriaga and R. Joseph-Salisbury. 2021. 'The University Went to "Decolonize" and All They Brought Back Was Lousy Diversity Double-Speak! Critical Race Counterstories from Faculty of Colour in "Decolonial" Times', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 53(3): 233–44.
- Downey, L., E. Lawrence, M. Pyles and D. Lee. 2020. 'Power, Hegemony, and the World Society Theory: A Critical Evaluation', *Socius* 6: 1–22.
- Elkins, C. 2015. 'Looking beyond Mau Mau: Archiving Violence in the Era of Decolonization', *The American Historical Review* 120(3): 852–68.
- Evans, R.E. 2023. 'Open Scholarship, and Decolonization in Higher Education', *Compass: Journal of Learning and Teaching* 16(2): 21–29.
- Fabian, J. 1983. *Time and the Other*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- FAO. Global-Hub on Indigenous Peoples' Food Systems. 2021. 'Rethinking Hierarchies of Evidence for Sustainable Food Systems', *Nature Food* 2(11): 843–45.

- Fischer, M. 2018. *Anthropology in the Meantime: Experimental Ethnography, Theory, and Method for the Twenty-First Century*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Foucault, M. 1961. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [L'archéologie du savoir]. Gallimard.
- Goody, J. 2010. *Renaissances: The One or the Many?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2012. *The Theft of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gopal, P. 2021. 'On Decolonization and the University', *Textual Practice* 35(6): 873–99.
- Hall, R., L. Ansley, P. Connolly, S. Loonat, K. Patel and B. Whitman. 2021. 'Struggling for the Anti-racist University: Learning from an Institution-wide Response to Curriculum Decolonization', *Teaching in Higher Education* 26(7–8): 902–19.
- Hanks, W., and C. Severi (eds). 2014. 'Translating Worlds: The Epistemological Space of Translation', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4(2) (Special Issue, Autumn).
- Hartman, S. 2008. 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12(2): 1–14.
- Harvey, A., and G. Russell-Mundine. 2019. 'Decolonizing the Curriculum: Using Graduate Qualities to Embed Indigenous Knowledges at the Academic Cultural Interface', *Teaching in Higher Education* 24(6): 789–808.
- Haynes, D.M. 2001. *Imperial Medicine: Patrick Manson and the Conquest of Tropical Disease*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hirsch, L. 2022. 'LSHTM and Colonialism: A Report on the Colonial History of London School Hygiene Tropical Medicine (1899–c.1960)'. Edited by Rebecca Martin. London: LSHTM. Retrieved 30 January 2026 from https://researchonline.lshtm.ac.uk/id/eprint/4666958/1/Hirsch_Martin_2022_LSHTM-and-colonialism-a-report.pdf.
- Hutnyk, J. 2020. 'The Pecuniary Animus of the University', *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 53(4): 327–37.
- Johnson, R. 2010. "'An All-White Institution": Defending Private Practice and the Formation of the West African Medical Staff', *Medical History* 54(2): 237–54.
- Keele University (Decolonising the Curriculum Network). 2018. 'Manifesto for Decolonizing the Curriculum', *Journal of Global Faultlines* 5(1–2): 97–99.
- Khan, M., Abimbola, S., Aloudat T., Capobianco E., Hawkes, S., and A. Rahman-Shepherd. 2021. 'Decolonizing Global Health in 2021: A Roadmap to Move from Rhetoric to Reform', *BMJ Global Health* 6: e005604. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2021-005604.
- Lowry, J. 2019. *Displaced Archives*. Milton Park: Routledge.
- Manson-Bahr, S.P. 1956. *History of the School of Tropical Medicine in London, 1899–1949*. London: H.K. Lewis & Co.
- Marcus, G.E. 1995. 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multisited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95–117.
- Martinelli, A. 2007. 'Evolution from World System to World Society?' *World Futures* 63(5–6): 425–42.
- Meda, L. 2020. 'Decolonizing the Curriculum: Students' Perspectives', *Africa Education Review* 17(2): 88–103.
- Meyer, J.W., J. Boli, G.M. Thomas and F.O. Ramirez. 1997. 'World Society and the Nation State', *American Journal of Sociology* 103(1) (July): 144–81.

- Meyer, J.W., and R.L. Jepperson. 2000. 'The "Actors" of Modern Society: The Cultural Construction of Social Agency', *Sociological Theory* 18: 100–120.
- Odabaei, M. 2022. 'Burning Translations', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 12(1) (Spring): 277–84.
- Paganopoulos, M. 2018. *In-Between Fiction and Non-Fiction*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.
- . 2024. 'Modelling the New "Social"', in S. Abram, H. Lambert and J. Robinson (eds), *How to Live through a Pandemic (ASA Monographs)*. New York: Routledge, pp. 64–91.
- Parsons, S., et al. 2022. 'A Community-Sourced Glossary of Open Scholarship Terms', *Nature Human Behaviour* 6: 312–18.
- Ross-Hellauer, T., S. Reichmann, N.L. Cole, A. Fessl, T. Klebel and N. Pontika. 2022. 'Dynamics of Cumulative Advantage and Threats to Equity in Open Science: A Scoping Review', *Royal Society Open Science* 9(1): 211032. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.211032>.
- Sen, A. 1992. *Inequality Re-examined*. New York: Russell Sage.
- Shain, F., Ü.K. Yildiz, V. Poku and B. Gokay. 2021. 'From Silence to "Strategic Advancement": Institutional Responses to "Decolonizing" in Higher Education in England', *Teaching in Higher Education* 26(7–8): 920–36.
- Smith, A.C., L. Merz, J.B. Borden, C.K. Gulick, A.R. Kshiragar and E.M. Bruna. 2021. 'Assessing the Effect of Article Processing Charges on the Geographic Diversity of Authors Using Elsevier's "Mirror Journal" System', *Quantitative Science Studies* 2(4): 1123–43.
- Spivak, G.C. 1985. 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives', *History and Theory* 24(3) (October): 247–72.
- . 1993. 'The Burden of English', in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, pp. 134–57.
- . 2005. 'Translation into English', in Sandra Bermann and Michael Wood (eds), *Nation, Language, and the Ethics of Translation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, pp. 93–110.
- . 2010. 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Rosalind C. Morris (ed.), *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea*. New York: Columbia UP, pp. 21–78.
- Stichweh, R. 2007. 'The Eigenstructures of World Society and the Regional Cultures of the World', in I. Rossi (ed.), *Frontiers of Globalization Research*. Boston, MA: Springer, pp. 133–48.
- . 2019. 'World Society', in Ludger Kuhnhardt and Tilman Mayer (eds), *The Bonn Handbook of Globality*, Vol. I. Cham: Springer, pp. 515–17.
- Stivachtis, Y.A., and A. McKeil. 2018. 'Conceptualizing World Society', *International Politics* 55: 1–10.
- Strathern, M. 2000. *Audio Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics and the Academy*. London: Routledge.
- Tambiah, J.S. 1990. *Magic Science Religion and the Scope of Rationality*. Cambridge UP.
- Taylor, A. 2022. 'Anthropology Comes In When Translation Fails', *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie sociale* 30(1): 91–103.

- Turner, H., and K. Hennessy. 2025. 'Transmediation as Method and Intervention: The Woven Artwork of Jaad Kuujus (Meghann O'Brien)', *Journal of Material Culture* 30(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/13591835251340919>.
- UNESCO. 2021. 'UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science'. Retrieved 30 January 2026 from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379949.locale=en>.
- Wilkinson, L., and A. Hardy. 2001. *Prevention and Cure: The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine: A 20th-Century Quest for Global Public Health*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wittmann, V. 2014. 'World Society and Globalization', *Journal for Multicultural Education* 8(3): 194–206.
- Worboys, M. 1988. 'Manson, Ross and Colonial Medical Policy: Tropical Medicine in London and Liverpool, 1899–1914', in R. MacLeod and L. Milton (eds), *Disease, Medicine and Empire: Perspectives on Western Medicine and the Experience of European Expansion*. London: Routledge, pp. 21–37.