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Where Do We Go From Here: A Qualitative Study of the Ethical and Legal Concerns Surrounding the Possibility of Restitution of Colonial Objects deemed to be looted in the Possession of Dutch Museums

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Jua".



DECLARATION

I, Ma. Vhiktorija Siva hereby declare that this thesis, entitled “A Qualitative Study of the Ethical and Legal Concerns Surrounding the Possibility of Restitution of Colonial Objects deemed to be looted in the Possession of Dutch Museums”, submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within this text of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the bibliography.

I declare that the written (printed and bound) and the electronic copy of the submitted MA thesis are identical.

I hereby also acknowledge that I was informed about the regulations pertaining to the assessment of the MA thesis Euroculture and about the general completion rules for the Master of Arts Programme Euroculture.

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ABSTRACT:

In recent years, the Netherlands has been lauded for its openness in discussing its colonial history and for being a forerunner in the talks about the restitution of looted colonial objects in its possession. In 2020, news concerning the possibility of the return of thousands of objects deemed to be looted by Dutch colonialists circulated the media. Several Dutch museums also came forward with vocal support for a proposed legal structure that will facilitate the return of these objects. The museum organization of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW) also published a document entitled: Return of Cultural Objects: Principles and Process which highlighted the organization's mission to address its museums' colonial past and to bring into focus the NMVW's commitment to the public. Additionally, the Dutch Minister for Science and Culture has also put forward a request for the creation of a legal framework to facilitate the proper handling of colonial objects in Dutch possession. These developments prove that the discourse surrounding the restitution of colonial objects are not only being affected by legal concerns but more importantly by ethical ones as well. It shows that the questions such as who truly owns these objects and who has the right to tell their stories are just as important as asking the logistic question of how do we return these objects to the proper parties? With this in mind, this research aims to look at the bigger picture of how the Netherlands, as a former colonizing power that is being put in the spotlight, is finding the balance between these legal and ethical concerns. A chapter of the Dutch case study will be provided and Key Informant Interviews with museum and cultural professionals in the Netherlands were done and analyzed through Thematic Analysis and Qualitative Analysis in order to create a complete understanding of the situation and to answer the main research question: How is the Netherlands developing in terms of decolonizing its museums and confronting its colonial past by looking into the possibility of restitution of colonial objects in its possession?

Keywords: *Restitution, Museums, Postcolonial, Decolonization*

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam!

I. INTRODUCTION

Today's contemporary world is built from the remnants of European and non-European intercontinental empires. Centuries after the physical dismantling of these colonial empires, the effects of colonization continue to reverberate across the globe. This figurative and physical dismantling of colonization is an undeniable shift not only for the former colonizing powers but also for the former colonies who one by one found independence and international recognition. This dismantling however does not change the fact that there continues to be residues of colonialism both tangible and intangible in nature. Some remainders of colonization have become too deeply entrenched in social structures that untangling them from contemporary issues prove to be a feat that the modern world continues to struggle with today. In recent years, once unheard colonial injustices have become amplified in the political and social scenes. Movements such as Black Lives Matters bring attention not only to racially motivated violence but also to the causes of these acts that can be traced back to years of structural and colonial trauma.

Once silenced colonial voices are becoming more amplified as demands for the need to bring attention to the colonial past are becoming more and more explicit. Bringing attention to colonial injustices is however not the only important step. It must also be considered how exactly these injustices must be addressed from both sides. It has become apparent that this manner of decolonization should be concretely seen and felt. One way that this is being done is by bringing cultural institutions with colonial histories into the spotlight; the most notable of these institutions being the museum. The pasts of museums, as well as the pasts of the artefacts within their collections are then brought to the attention of the general public as a more globalized and informed world starts to ask questions that are ethical in nature. These questions now have more depth and are triggering sensitive discussions that should be considered with an open mind. The museum world is slowly seeing the complexities of keeping colonial artefacts within their collections as questions on provenance, ownership, the proper way of dealing with said artefacts, and the talks about restitution and repatriation are starting to take up more space in the discussion of decolonization in museums. As the pasts of museums and the artefacts inside of them are given prominence, the present state of the discussion, as well as the future direction of these institutions are also being accentuated.

The Netherlands was one of the powerful colonizing countries of the past. Centuries of colonialism led to inevitable exchange of people, cultures, and objects. Even years after, both tangible and intangible legacies of this time persists as can be seen in the continued Dutch possession of hundreds of thousands of colonial objects. Even though the Netherlands is not the only country that continues to hold colonially acquired objects in its museums, it is however one of the countries that are catching the media's attention when it comes to the discussion of the possibility of restitution of these objects. Several news articles have branded the Netherlands as a forerunner in the debate of restitution because of the developments that have happened in recent years concerning the Dutch's awareness of its colonial past. However, being labeled as a forerunner is different from truly embodying this title through conclusive steps that are recognized by both the public and the Dutch museum community.

This research therefore aims to see how the Netherlands and in particular Dutch museums is developing in terms of decolonizing its museums and confronting its colonial past by looking into the possibility of restitution of colonial objects. Focus will be given on how the Netherlands is dealing with both the legal and ethical concerns surrounding these objects considering their sensitivities. In order to answer the research question, data gathering was conducted through key informant interviews with participants that are professionals involved in the museum and cultural community in the Netherlands. The four participants are the following: Arjen Dijkstra, the director of the University Museum Groningen (Rijksmuseum Groningen) and adviser to the board of the University of Groningen; Arjen Uijterlinde, the Ambassador for Culture and Cooperation of the Netherlands and is affiliated with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken) and International Cultural Policy Unit (Eenheid Internationaal Cultuurbeleid (ICE)); Jona Mooren, an art history researcher at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies and one of the project leaders of the Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects from the Colonial Era (PPOCE); and Rosalie Hans, a provenance researcher general at the National Museum of World Cultures (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen NMVW) group of museums. These participants were selected specifically because of the nature of their professions. In one way or another, the participants are involved or are affected by the debate of provenance research, restitution, and the changes that decolonization in Dutch museums may bring.

The interviews with the participants were transcribed and analyzed using the two research methodologies of thematic analysis and qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis was first done to identify common themes across the interview transcripts and qualitative analysis was done to look deeper into the identified commonalities and to situate these ideas in the wider context of the case study. Postcolonial theory and the process of decolonization specifically in museums are concepts that guided the analysis of this research. During the writing of this research, fieldwork was unfortunately not possible because of the COVID-19 pandemic. All the interviews were therefore done online either with the use of online platforms or through email.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Dutch Case So Far

The Netherlands was one of the most prominent colonizing powers in history. It has 400 years of colonial history and had trading posts that spanned across four continents at the height of its power. The Dutch United East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie / VOC) was undoubtedly the most prosperous trading company during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. The rapid growth of the VOC gave the Netherlands the financial means to undertake the military operations that were necessary to possess a monopoly of the spice trade.¹ As a result of this, the Netherlands was able to acquire wealth both in terms of money and material resources.² It was also during this time that culture, language, people, and objects traveled across oceans from one country to the next.

Even after the dismantling of the VOC, cultural objects continued to flow to the Netherlands through different means during the nineteenth century. These objects may have arrived in the Netherlands through a variety of ways: either they were given as gifts, looted, bought, or acquired in other ways such as through scientific expeditions or the creation of colonial exhibitions. From 1859 - 1909 the number of colonial objects in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde's collection saw a sharp increase from a mere 297 objects to 36, 671 where most of these objects came as a result of colonial wars in Atjeh, Lombok, and Bali, as well as the creation of colonial world exhibitions such as the ones in Paris (1878) and Amsterdam (1883).³ Some of the objects that were collected for these exhibitions were then given to Dutch ethnological museums.⁴ As a result, numerous cultural objects came into Dutch museums' possession where some of them continue to be to this day.⁵ This makes the Dutch colonial collection quite expansive both in form and in terms of where they are currently located now. These objects are

¹"Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie," TANAP: Towards A New Age of Partnership, accessed July 29, 2021, http://www.tanap.net/content/voc/organization/organization_intro.htm.

²Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections, "Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice" (Netherlands: Council for Culture, 2021), 18.

³Ger van Wengen, "Indonesian Collections at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden," in *Treasure Hunting? Collectors and Collections of Indonesian Artefacts* (Leiden: CNWS, 2002), 81–108.

⁴ van Wengen, "Indonesian Collections at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden," 86-87.

⁵Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections, "Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice," 10.

scattered across the Netherlands in state museums, university museums, and private collections. The mere presence of these objects in Dutch museums have started a debate on restitution throughout the years especially in relation to source countries that are former Dutch colonies. As Pieter ter Keurs pointed out, collecting is never a neutral activity and that the act of collecting especially through the context of colonialism is political in nature as it concerns a type of power relationship between the owner of the object and the other party who is desiring to collect the object.⁶

The exchange of culture and inevitably of colonial cultural objects is not exclusively seen in the Dutch case. Other former colonizing powers are also dealing with the colonial concerns from the past that continue to influence the world today. The calls for decolonization, restitution, or at least the space for colonial narratives to be discussed have been gaining momentum in recent years. Other former colonizing powers like France and the United Kingdom are also dealing with talks on restitution in their own ways. The responses varied from promises to return looted colonial artefacts, to museums “lending” certain artefacts to their source countries.⁷ In the Dutch case, the talks concerning its colonial past does not exclusively revolve around talks on restitution. In 2019, the Amsterdam Museum was in the news by making the decision to no longer use the term “Golden Age” to refer to the 17th century when the Netherlands was at the peak of its military and trading power.⁸ There are also talks on changing the black faced character of Zwarte Piet as more and more Dutch people are becoming more in favor of getting rid of the character or at least changing the character’s appearance.⁹

The variety in the discussions shows how the Netherlands is one of the former colonizing powers that is more open to the dialogue of its colonial past. In fact, it continues to have open communication with its former colonies not just in terms of the restitution of colonial objects but also in terms of making reparations. This can be seen concretely in the case of the Netherlands

⁶Pieter ter Keurs, “Collecting in the Colony: Hybridity, Power and Prestige in the Netherlands East Indies,” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 37, no. 108 (2009): 147–61.

⁷ Cameron Charters, “Victoria & Albert Museum to Lend Looted Treasure Back to Africa,” *The Sunday Times*, May 17, 2021,

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/victoria-amp-albert-museum-to-lend-looted-treasure-back-to-africa-dd0qhjksg>.

⁸ Daniel Boffey, “End of Golden Age: Dutch Museum Bans Term from Exhibits,” *The Guardian*, September 13, 2019,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/13/end-of-golden-age-amsterdam-museum-bans-term-from-exhibits>.

⁹ “Nederlands Accepteert Verandering (Zwarte) Piet,” *I&o Research*, December 2, 2020, <https://www.ioresearch.nl/actueel/zwarte-piet/>.

and Indonesia. The Netherlands offered its first general apology in 2013 where the Dutch ambassador to Indonesia, Tjeerd de Zwaan apologized for the “excesses committed” by the Dutch forces between the years 1945 - 1949 and the country also paid compensations in certain cases.¹⁰ The most recent apologies were offered by the Dutch King Willem-Alexander in March 2020 during his first state visit to Indonesia where he apologized for the colonial aggressions of his country and he also formally recognized the independence date of Indonesia during said visit.¹¹ A part of this also looks into the idea of righting colonial justices which makes talks about restitution and repatriation a big focus. In consequence to this, the spotlight has also focused on the abundance of Dutch museums that continue to hold colonial collections.

The openness of the Netherlands concerning restitution has gained momentum especially in the eyes of the media and the public in recent years even though the practice of restitution itself is not a new phenomenon. With this openness also came the debate of how exactly restitution should proceed and with what exact objects? Considering that there are hundreds of thousands of colonial objects in the Netherlands, these questions will be quite hard to answer. As pointed out by Jos van Beurden, there is resounding agreement that looted colonial objects must be restituted back to the former colonies. One of the biggest problems is that the whole process of this is quite slow.¹² One thing that became apparent is the lack of Dutch legal mechanisms that will make restitution possible. In one way, this lack of a legal mechanism or framework can also be seen as a way of avoiding restitution.¹³ Afterall, restitution cannot even begin if there are no ways to put up a claim or any legal basis to support the long process. However, these legal aspects of restitution are only one part of the conundrum. Other things that should be taken together with these legal concerns are the meaning and the reasons for restitution when it comes to both the Netherlands and the source countries.

¹⁰ “Netherlands Apology for Indonesia 1940s Killings,” BBC News, September 12, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24060913>.

¹¹ Andy Jatmiko and Niniek Karmini, “Dutch King Apologizes for Deadly Colonial Legacy in Indonesia,” *The Diplomat*, March 10, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/03/dutch-king-apologizes-for-deadly-colonial-legacy-in-indonesia/>.

¹² Jos van Beurden, “Teruggave van Koloniale Roofkunst Kan Veel Sneller,” *NRC*, May 25, 2021, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2021/05/25/teruggave-van-koloniale-roofkunst-kan-veel-sneller-a4044753#:~:text=Het%20teruggave%20van%20roofkunst%20uit,verhouding%20met%20voormalige%20koloni%C3%ABn%20verbeteren>.

¹³ Wouter Veraart, “Teruggave Erfgoed Mag Geen Liefdadigheid Zijn,” *NRC*, November 28, 2018, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2018/11/28/teruggave-erfgoed-mag-geen-liefdadigheid-zijn-a2780481>.

For the Dutch case, the concerns surrounding restitution are complex as museum scholars are not only questioning the lack of a legal framework for restitution but are also asking for a clear path as to which the ethical concerns will also be solved. As a result of these vocal concerns, news articles have also been labeling the Netherlands as the leader in terms of setting an example for other former colonizing powers in the field of restitution.¹⁴ The existence of a debate concerning restitution in the Netherlands has caught the eye of the media, with UNESCO lauding the Netherlands not only for acknowledging its colonial past but more importantly for confronting it.¹⁵ This confrontation can be seen in the Dutch commitment of correcting colonial injustice and how it is mostly being seen in light of the recent developments in the talks of restitution. Being highlighted is The National Museum of World Cultures (NMVW) and their pledge to return colonial artefacts within their collection that are considered looted or stolen. With this came the publication of the document entitled, 'Return of Cultural Objects: Principles and Process' in 2019 which highlights the encompassing mission of the NMVW to address the colonial past that have brought the collections into their possession.¹⁶ These principles and processes were created as a step towards clearer communication between parties by offering systematic guidelines that are set within the national and international legal context. This document was created as a guide and as a proof of the NMVW's commitment to transparency in terms of the evaluation of claims for the return of colonial objects within its possession which is an estimated 450,000 items.¹⁷

Provenance research or in depth research on the origins of objects in the Dutch collections seem to be a key focus for the Netherlands in creating their next steps. An indication of this commitment to provenance research can be seen in the creation of the 'Pilot Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era' (PPROCE) project by the NMVW and Rijksmuseum together with the Provenance Research Expertise Centre of the Netherlands Institute for War,

¹⁴ Catherine Hickley, "Netherlands Takes Lead in Europe's Efforts to Return Artefacts to Former Colonies," *The Art Newspaper*, February 4, 2021, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/netherlands-takes-lead-in-europe-s-efforts-to-return-of-artefacts-from-former-colonies>.

¹⁵ Catherine Hickley, "The Netherlands: Museums Confront the Country's Colonial Past," *UNESCO: The Courier*, 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/courier/2020-4/netherlands-museums-confront-countrys-colonial-past>.

¹⁶ Hickley, "The Netherlands: Museums Confront the Country's Colonial Past."

¹⁷ "Return of Colonial Objects : Principles and Process" (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, March 7, 2019), <https://www.volkenkunde.nl/sites/default/files/2019-05/Claims%20for%20Return%20of%20Cultural%20Objects%20NMVW%20Principles%20and%20Process.pdf>.

Holocaust and Genocide Studies (NIOD). This project was specifically created to develop a stable methodology for future provenance research with a focus on colonial objects. For the sake of this project, particular objects of Indonesian and Sri Lankan origins are being investigated. The results of this project will then be summarized in a report including certain recommendations on how to proceed with proper provenance research concerning colonial artefacts to be presented to the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture, and Science.¹⁸

Another important development happened on 10 April 2019 when the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, Ingrid van Engelshoven, published a letter informing the House of Representatives that she wishes to see through a concrete policy direction in terms of how to handle colonial cultural heritage and the possibility of its restitution.¹⁹ As a result of this request, the Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections created the document entitled: ‘Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice’ as a form of guidance on the way forward concerning the Dutch colonial collections. This advisory report acts as a firm foundation in creating a proposed legal framework for the returns and ways of handling objects in the Dutch colonial collections in the future. A separate part has been dedicated to summarizing and analyzing this advisory report in more detail. It is however worth noting that even before the creation of this advisory report, restitution has been happening quite sporadically. It should also be taken into consideration that even though the museums act as the caretakers of colonial cultural heritage, they are ultimately not the owners of these collections. A majority of the case collections are owned by the State or by other parties such as universities, associations, and foundations. This means that if the State is the perceived owner of the collection or object, it is the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science which has the capacity to decide on how to handle these cases and more specifically decide on whether certain objects will be returned or not.²⁰

¹⁸ NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, “Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPOCE),” niod, accessed June 23, 2021, <https://www.niod.nl/en/projects/pilotproject-provenance-research-objects-colonial-era-pproce>.

¹⁹ Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections, “Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice,” 13.

²⁰ Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections, “Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice,” 13-14.

Dutch History of Restitution

Discussions about restitution as well as the act of restitution itself have been going on between former colonizing powers and the source countries for years. In the case of the Netherlands, the country has restituted several objects in the past and the earliest of these restitutions can be traced back to the colonial period.²¹ It is worth noting that most restitutions happened between the Netherlands and Indonesia which may be because a considerable amount of the colonial artefacts in Dutch possession are of Indonesian origin. Restitution between these two countries have been going on between the years 1907 until the most recent ones in 2020.²² Aside from restitutions to Indonesia, two notable cases of restitution can be pinpointed to source countries of former Dutch colonies in the Atlantic, specifically Aruba and Suriname.²³

In the case of Indonesia, the history and attempts of restitution are more comprehensive. The earliest records of returns come before the Indonesian independence in 1907 and a few years after in 1938 when the Netherlands returned regalia to the sultanates of Bone and Gowa which suffered Dutch military actions in the years 1905 and 1906.²⁴ There have also been discussions and failed attempts of cultural agreements between the two parties on several occasions. In 1949, a cultural agreement was drafted where Article 19 specifically related to restitution. This article states that the cultural heritage objects that have been unlawfully acquired or taken should be given back to the Indonesian government. This treaty was however not ratified and the cultural agreement fell through without making much progress.²⁵

After their independence, the talks concerning restitution were only brought up from the side of Indonesia. They tried a couple of times to bring up the issue of restitution in 1952 and in 1963 but these efforts did not result in anything tangible nor to any returns of cultural objects. It was only during the rise to power of President Suharto in 1968 that an agreement between the two countries concerning cultural heritage objects was established.²⁶ As a result of this

²¹ Ibid., 40.

²² Ibid., 40-43.

²³ Ibid., 44.

²⁴ Marieke Bloembergen and Martijn Eickhoff, "Exchange and the Protection of Java's Antiquities: A Transnational Approach to the Problem of Heritage in Colonial Java," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, no. 4 (November 2013): 893-916.

²⁵ Jos van Beurden, *Treasures in Trusted Hands: Negotiating The Future of Colonial Cultural Objects* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2017), 127-131.

²⁶ van Beurden, *Treasures in Trusted Hands: Negotiating The Future of Colonial Cultural Objects*, 127-132.

agreement, two paintings by Raden Saleh Sjarif Bastaman were returned in 1970 and in 1973 the Nagarakretagama manuscript was returned to the Museum Nasional during Queen Juliana's state visit. It was also in 1970 that the Military Attache of the Indonesian Embassy in the Hague visited the Royal Home for Soldiers in Bronbeek and the Armies and Weapons Museum in Leiden to look through the collections and identify certain objects that could be candidates for return.²⁷ In 1974, another visit was done under a technical cooperation between the municipalities of Jakarta and Amsterdam where mayor Sudiro of Jakarta and other representatives of the Yayasan Gedung2 Bersejarah (Historic Buildings Foundation) flew to the Netherlands to look for historic Indonesian objects that can be used in some of the historic buildings in Jakarta. They visited twenty-one institutions and came up with a list of ten thousand objects that can be claimed.²⁸

In 1975, the Netherlands started to show willingness to collaborate with Indonesia in terms of establishing museums as well as archives. It was also in 1975 that negotiations between experts from both sides resulted in a joint recommendation which talks about cultural cooperation and transfer of cultural objects.²⁹ In the years after this recommendation, various restitutions and handing over of objects to Indonesian authorities happened such as some of the belongings of Prince Diponegoro and an estimated half (243 objects) of the Lombok treasures.³⁰ The flow of returns have slowed down since then as there have been no official calls for restitution since the 1970's aside from calls from private individuals. It was also during this time period that attention to the topic of restitution and the Dutch colonial past has been brought more to the attention of the academia as well as the public. This attention however did not result in any restitution. The most recent restitution happened in 2020 when the pilgrim's staff and kris linked to Prince Diponegoro were returned to Indonesia.³¹

²⁷ Ibid., 135-145.

²⁸ Ibid., 132-136.

²⁹ Ibid., 137.

³⁰ Ibid., 144-147.

³¹ "The 'Kris' of Prince Diponegoro Returned to Indonesia," *Kingdom of the Netherlands*, 2020, <https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/latest-news/news/2020/03/10/the-kris-of-prince-diponegoro-returned-to-indonesia>

Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice

Last 10 April 2019, the Dutch Minister of Education, Culture, and Science, Ingrid van Engelshoven, informed the House of Representatives of her desire to create a concrete Dutch policy direction pertaining to the colonial collections of the Netherlands. It is with this letter that the Minister expressed two main goals that she wants to achieve. First, she wants transparent accessibility of colonial heritage in the Dutch national collections in order to promote visibility of the colonial past, and secondly, she wishes to develop some kind of national policy framework that pertains specifically to the colonial collections. This may come in the form of a methodology for proper provenance research and a clear procedure on how to deal with calls for restitution. She also intends to give priority to cultural heritage objects belonging to former Dutch colonies where strong evidence can be cited that they have been looted or involuntarily taken in some way. The Minister then asked the Council for Culture for an advisory committee to create the necessary framework and background that will make the aspirations stated in her letter into a success by the 1st of October 2020.³²

As a result of this request, the Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections created the document entitled: “Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice” as a form of guidance on the way forward concerning the Dutch colonial collections. This report was created with the participation of Dutch museums with colonial collections as well as members of the Museums Association and the Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency. The document itself is quite comprehensive and is divided into ten sections including an overview of the Dutch colonial legacy, the objects that are in the colonial collections, developments not just in the Netherlands but also in other countries that also possess colonial collections, the views of the source countries, the relevant matters in terms of handling colonial collections, the legal framework, and most importantly the guidance being presented to the Minister as well as the twelve concrete recommendations of the committee.³³

The recommendations themselves are straightforward and extensive. They affirm the readiness of the Netherlands to unconditionally return cultural heritage objects that have been proven to be involuntarily lost while cases where the objects that are not proven to be

³²Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections, “Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice,” 13 - 14.

³³Ibid., 13.

involuntarily lost will be considered through the basis of reasonableness and fairness. At the core of the recommendations are the main guiding principles of recognizing and rectifying the injustice that has been done. In accordance with these ideas, the committee also recommends the adoption of joint policies that embody said principles, especially when it comes to countries where the Netherlands had colonial history with, specifically Indonesia, Suriname, and the Caribbean Islands. Aside from the principle of restoring justice, the recommendations also stress the importance of having an equal footing between the Netherlands and the source countries when it comes to dialogue and eventually the creation of joint policies.³⁴ In terms of concrete steps on decision making, the committee recommends that the Minister should be the one who decides on requests for returns with the help of an independent advisory committee. The committee also recognizes the importance of provenance research as a big part of this dialogue. They ask the Minister to bring the museums' attention to their responsibility of provenance research and also recommended the establishment of an Expertise Centre on the Provenance of Colonial Cultural Heritage Objects.³⁵ Lastly, the committee recognizes that the return of cultural heritage objects is not the only important step to be taken and further cooperation between the Netherlands and the source countries are just as important. Cooperation in this regard can be seen through the creation of better museum infrastructure and the exchange of knowledge between countries to name a few.³⁶ In summary, the twelve recommendations emphasize the importance of the principles of recognizing and rectifying past injustices, creating equal footing between the Netherlands and the source countries, the importance of provenance research, and the efforts of cooperation that may come in different ways.

At the time of writing of this research, the Dutch government has agreed to adopt the guidelines inspired by the advisory report but discussions are still pending as the Netherlands is in the process of creating a new parliament after the 2021 national elections.³⁷ This then means that creation of a policy or a legal framework pertaining to the handling of the Dutch colonial

³⁴Ibid., 4-8.

³⁵ Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections, "Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice," 4-8.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Sarah Cascone, "The Dutch Government Just Promised to Return Any Stolen Colonial-Era Objects in Its Collections Back to Their Countries of Origin," *Artnet News*, February 4, 2021, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/netherlands-restitution-guidelines-1941734>.

collections is being guided by this document and therefore its clarity is of utmost importance. The existence of this report shows the complexities surrounding the colonial objects that continue to be in the former colonies' possession. It shows that this topic in itself, without taking the possibility of restitution just yet, requires a lot of consideration of numerous actors from both the sides of the Netherlands and the source countries. It is only natural that these complexities create ambiguities. It is therefore important to note that the advisory report made clear distinctions between certain definitions that would be important when considering requests for return. The advisory differentiates between three cases of how a cultural heritage object has come into Dutch hands specifically a.) cultural heritage objects acquired without consent of the owner or through involuntary loss, b.) cultural heritage objects acquired with consent of the owner which may have been given as a gift or acquired through certain collectors or institutions, c.) cultural heritage objects whose histories of acquisition are unclear.³⁸ Differentiating between these three cases will therefore create a clearer direction for any policy or framework to be developed.

³⁸Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections, "Colonial Collection: A Recognition of Injustice," 54-55.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism covers wide research ground. Unlike most theories in the social sciences, postcolonial theory does not simply show the cause and effect, nor does it predict the future plausible social outcomes based on already established social contexts.³⁹ Instead, it can be best described as a theory that is composed of multiple related sets of perspectives that interact with one another sometimes in harmony and sometimes contradictorily.⁴⁰ It illustrates a complex field of study that covers a variety of affairs that include issues such as identity, gender, and racism to name only a few. At the core of this theory lies the focus on analyzing knowledge systems which support colonialism, neocolonialism, and other various forms of structural oppression. It also challenges the destruction and appropriation of the colonized's knowledge which also includes the colonizer's use of that knowledge for their own interest. In this way, postcolonial theory can be viewed as a critique of imperial knowledge; the systems that it created, the language it uses, and the way it has established certain ways of thinking that benefit imperial interests.⁴¹ It is a theory that is concerned with power relations and the connections of dominance versus subjection and resistance. These connections are those that are specifically rooted in colonial history and continue to persist even today.

Considering that this theory does not follow the same structure as other theories, it has therefore been criticized for its multiplicity. It is complex and porous in nature which means that a single perspective is not desirable nor is it possible.⁴² As a result, the term has been questioned from both a temporal and critical perspective.⁴³ Ella Shohat summarizes the critiques well when she says that the intention of the interrogation is not merely to look into the term semantically but also to better situate it geographically, historically, and even institutionally, all the while raising concerns about the term's political agency as well. This then raises the questions of whose perspectives are truly being advanced in what is considered the postcolonial and for what

³⁹ Navadeep Khanal, "The Lens of Postcolonial Theory in LIS Research and Practice" (Urbana, Illinois, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012), 6.

⁴⁰ Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6-7.

⁴¹ Violet Bridget Lunga, "Postcolonial Theory: A Language for a Critique of Globalization?," *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 7, no. 3-4 (2008): 191-99, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156914908X371349>.

⁴² Khanal, "The Lens of Postcolonial Theory in LIS Research and Practice," 6.

⁴³ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism / Postcolonialism*, Third (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2015), 39.

purpose is this being done?⁴⁴ To follow the logic of the terms such as postmodernity, poststructuralism, and post-marxism, the postcolonial then implies a contemporary state, condition, or period which insinuates that there is an inclination of moving beyond in terms of replacing outdated philosophies and beliefs. However, when it comes to the term “postcolonial” it also implies that there is a going beyond a specific period in time, specifically the time of colonialism and the third world nationalist struggles.

This tension between the philosophical and historical that surrounds the term postcolonial, highlights its conceptual ambiguity. Shohat points out that the term itself carries the implication that colonialism is done with finality which undermines the persisting colonial traces that can still be seen at present.⁴⁵ The term tends to undermine the fact that global hegemony continues to exist in more concealed manners. This critique was however answered by Hulme as he points out that the use of the term “postcolonial” does not automatically mean that one’s work has been rid of the evils of colonialism. He points out that this should be seen as a descriptive term more than an evaluative one.⁴⁶ The use of the prefix “post” does not merely suggest that the effects and influences of colonialism have already disappeared. Instead, it brings attention to the fact that colonial influences continue to impact and shape a colonial way of thinking pertaining to the world, particularly Western forms of knowledge. Behdad on the other hand, highlights that the mere need to raise these questions about postcolonialism acknowledges its complexity as a varied and divided field of theoretical practice.⁴⁷ Taking into account that it focuses on colonial born power struggles that continue to play a role in today’s society, a natural theme that comes with postcolonial theory is decolonization which is a process that shows the interplay of power between the colonizer and colonized.

Decolonization

Decolonization is a key postcolonial theme which is currently happening at a global scale. This is a logical process that sheds light on the relationships of the power struggles between the

⁴⁴Ella Shohat, “Notes on the Postcolonial,” in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000), 127.

⁴⁵ Shohat, “Notes on the Postcolonial,” 126-132.

⁴⁶Peter Hulme, “Including America,” *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 26, no. 1 (1995): 117–23.

⁴⁷ Ali Behdad, “Une Pratique Sauvage: Postcolonial Belatedness,” in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2000), 71-85.

colonizer and the colonized and the West and the Third World.⁴⁸ Since it is a global process that is happening simultaneously in different places and manners, decolonization is hard to exactly pin down. Prasenjit Duara points out that making generalizations about decolonization and fitting it into a well defined box is quite risky as it is not a coherent event and its timing, patterns, and goals are extremely varied.⁴⁹ To limit the definition of decolonization would erase the complexities and nuances within the term.⁵⁰ Jansen and Oosterhammel view decolonization as both a historical moment and a multilevel process that continues to persist in different regions of the world that are still shaking off colonial rule. They also point out that decolonization can be seen in local and global levels with scholars usually choosing to focus on one or the other.⁵¹ This definition shows decolonization as a multilevel process that cuts across different areas not only limited to the field of politics but just as importantly in the fields of culture, economy, and other normative foundations of the international community.

Shaheen Kasmani takes her definition of decolonization one step further as she defines it as a direct challenge of white supremacy and decentering of European views. She also points out that this challenging of the system leads to the valuing of narratives that were created by the Other that have always been present and are now finally being given the space to be seen and heard. It is understood as a process that remains to be ongoing.⁵² A huge part of decolonization is therefore deconstructing the systems of thoughts that use the straight white man as a standard and not simply giving space to the narratives of the former colonies. Decolonization in this regard is seen as a complete overhaul of the entire western dominated system.⁵³ It is a concept that does not only concern physical societal change but also a change in the society's mind-set. It is therefore important to analyze meaning making institutions and how their choices ultimately shape the mind-set of society. In addition to this, it also talks about creating "safe spaces" or

⁴⁸ Ilan Kapoor, *The Postcolonial Politics of Development* (USA & Canada: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2008), xiv.

⁴⁹Prasenjit Duara, "Introduction: The Decolonization of Asia and Africa in the Twentieth Century," in *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*, ed. Prasenjit Duara (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2004), 1-2.

⁵⁰ Loomba, "Colonialism / Postcolonialism", 31.

⁵¹Jan C. Jansen and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Decolonization, A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400884889>, 1-2.

⁵²Shaheen Kasmani, "Film: How Can You Decolonise Museums?," accessed January 29, 2021, <https://www.museumnext.com/article/decolonising-museums/>.

⁵³ Shaheen Kasmani, "Film: How Can You Decolonise Museums?," accessed January 29, 2021, <https://www.museumnext.com/article/decolonising-museums/>.

“decolonial places” where voices and stories are heard. These spaces are to be created as a place where open conversation and different understandings can be observed in a dignified manner especially when dealing with topics such as epistemic violence towards racialized communities.⁵⁴ This then shows that decolonization is very much a process that is grounded in the societal experiences of the contemporary world and is not only limited to talks about politics and governance. Jos van Beurden even refers to it as an unresolved conflict which is arguably even more so apparent in the way culture and cultural institutions have existed and changed over time.⁵⁵ More than this, decolonization remains to be a two-way process that must happen on the side of the former colonizing power just as much as from the side of the former colonies. As Grydehoj points out, the task that is decolonization remains to be unfinished and is perhaps even unfinishable on both ends. He states that decolonization will always be a balancing act between the ever present demands of Western oriented “modernity” that is geared towards finding a place in a more globalized world and the aspiration to preserve indigenous non-Western traditions.⁵⁶

Criticisms concerning decolonization revolve around the questions of how it should be done. Foluke Ifejola Adebisi points out that one of the most common pitfalls concerning decolonization are the misconceptions concerning what it requires not just in theory but more important in practice.⁵⁷ Past literature have criticized the applicability and feasibility of decolonization with some scholars even going as far as saying that decolonization cannot be achieved completely or at all. The specificities of decolonization continue to allude scholars both on paper and in action. As decolonization is an ongoing process, it is then hard to pinpoint when it will truly end and in what way it can be considered a success. Past literature has also referenced the need for decolonization in different places and practices where there have been calls to decolonize schools, curriculum, societal structures, and even research itself. Because of its versatility, decolonization can also be easily mixed and lost with other concepts such as

⁵⁴ Kodili Chukwuma and Moe Suzuki, “What Does ‘decolonisation’ Mean? A Critique of the Discourse of Decolonisation in the Political, Social, and International Studies Department at UEA,” October 7, 2020, <http://www.ueapolitics.org/2020/10/07/what-does-decolonisation-mean-a-critique-of-the-discourse-of-decolonisation-in-the-political-social-and-international-studies-department-at-uea/>.

⁵⁵ Jos van Beurden, “Decolonisation and Colonial Collections: An Unresolved Conflict,” *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 133, no. 2 (2018): 66–78.

⁵⁶ Adam Grydehoj, “Hearing Voices: Colonialism, Outsider Perspectives, Island and Indigenous Issues, and Publishing Ethics,” *Island Studies Journal* 13, no. 1 (2018): 3–12.

⁵⁷ Foluke Ifejola Adebisi, “Why I Say ‘Decolonisation Is Impossible,’” *African Skies* (blog), December 17, 2019, <https://folukeafrica.com/why-i-say-decolonisation-is-impossible/>.

diversity and inclusion.⁵⁸ As a result of this, decolonization is then seen at a surface level and has become a token word that is interchangeably used with diversity or even change. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang therefore call attention to the fact that decolonization is not a mere metaphor and that creating decolonized spaces that are more tokenistic than realistic is doing nothing but fueling the criticisms on decolonization and its ambiguities.⁵⁹ It is important that calls for the decolonization of places are grounded in concrete values. There is a need to see decolonization not just in physicality but also in the values that push these physical steps.

Decolonization in Museums

The museum is a prime example of a cultural space where talks of decolonization echoes the loudest. Museums are subtle agents of political and ideological persuasion as they do not merely present, they more importantly help in the creation of knowledge and interests of the greater public.⁶⁰ Throughout the years, museums have been heralded as shrines of memory, market driven institutions, and educational institutions.⁶¹ Andreas Huyssen describes museums as a cross between public fairs and department stores which are the product of society's search for authenticity and stability.⁶² Through the academic lens, much can be analyzed about the integrity and transformation of the museum as a cultural institution. However, in the eyes of the general public and tourists, museums are more often than not seen as uncontested spaces of memory which are automatically assumed to be places where historical truths are preserved, almost like a sanctuary of objects untouched by the contemporary changes of the outside world.⁶³

However, as past literature shows, the concepts of historical truth and authenticity in museums are more complicated and illusive than what it lets on. It is therefore important to see the difference between history and heritage and to know that museums, as one of the most

⁵⁸ Chukwuma and Suzuki, "What Does 'decolonisation' Mean? A Critique of the Discourse of Decolonisation in the Political, Social, and International Studies Department at UEA."

⁵⁹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40.

⁶⁰ Timothy W. Luke, *Museum Politics: Powerplays at the Exhibition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xii - xix.

⁶¹ Janet Marstine, ed., *New Museum Theory and Practice : An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2006), 12-18.

⁶² Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 1995), 32-35.

⁶³ Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds., *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2004), 13.

steadfast and most popular heritage spaces we have at present times, are places where the line between history and heritage often blurs. As David Lowenthal cautions, the act of treasuring and mistaking heritage as authentic history can lead to blindness to the biased limits of one's own legacy and to the disdain and derogation of other legacies that are different from one's own.⁶⁴ Scholars through the years have pointed out that museums are not and should not be seen as neutral uncontested spaces. Kevin Walsh argues that museums and heritage champion uncritical patriotism which effectively severs the public's ability to understand and converse with other cultures outside their own.⁶⁵ Museums are not only places where objects are to be displayed, they in themselves are "performances" which show the relationships between objects and ideas in certain specific ways.⁶⁶ Museums are then able to possess the power of shaping social collective values especially since most of the world still views museums as uncontested educational institutions.⁶⁷ A museum's authority therefore becomes problematic when the audience unquestioningly accepts the exhibits and values without any critical regard especially when it comes to objects and conversations connected to the colonial past. Colonialism has undeniably influenced the way museum collections have been shaped and in turn the way the audience perceives these collections both in the past and in the present. This is a legacy that most museums have to confront.⁶⁸

The authority of museums and complications with museum practices have always been criticized. In fact, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in partnership with The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) created a checklist or a comprehensive code of ethics for museums in the 1980s called the ICOM Code. This code aims to set the minimum standards of professional museum practice to be followed by the museum and its staff. The code is grounded in fundamental ethics and has the goal of public service and social development.⁶⁹ Although this checklist has been around since the 1980's and the ethical

⁶⁴ David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10-18.

⁶⁵ Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 1992), 1-15.

⁶⁶ Preziosi and Farago, eds., "Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum", 5.

⁶⁷ Luke, *Museum Politics: Powerplays at the Exhibition*, 5-18.

⁶⁸ Moira G. Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post Colonial Era* (USA and Canada: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 1996), 2-19.

⁶⁹ "Checklist on Ethics of Cultural Property Ownership" (International Council of Museums, n.d.), https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/110825_Checklist_print.pdf.

questions surrounding museums and their practices have been around for much longer, it was only recently that the more general public has become more aware of the calls for repatriation and inclusivity from former colonies which highlighted the issue of how the colonial past has been framed in museums. UNESCO has also been tackling these issues and have been encouraging the public's attention and participation concerning museums as spaces of not just culture but also of active decolonization.⁷⁰ This issue is only a small part of the colonial legacy that museums have to face today, as issues of cultural bias, lack of representation, and the question of ownership are all deeply interconnected with the recent calls of decolonization in museums. Minority groups and former colonies have become more and more vocal in their dissatisfaction with conventional museum practices and in the way their pasts and cultures have been represented. The recent Black Lives Matter movement which resulted in the defacements of colonial statues not only in the United States but all over the world is a very concrete manifestation of this dissatisfaction and the public's awareness of colonial injustices.⁷¹

The progressively vocal dissatisfaction resulted in more inclusive museum practices in recent years including more talks about the process of decolonizing museums.⁷² It is therefore inevitable that museum scholars and museums themselves have tried to make sense of what it means to decolonize museums. The Abbe Museum in the United States in Maine, sees the decolonization of museums as the sharing of authority in terms of documenting and interpreting Native culture within its collections and decisions. This view holds a lot of importance especially since the Abbe Museum actively deals with the history and culture of Maine's native people. It shows that the museum recognizes the difficulty of defining a complex concept such as decolonization as they reiterate that when the process of decolonization is done properly, it manifests its success in different ways depending on the organization or place it is being reflected upon. The Abbe Museum therefore stresses that decolonization in museums is then achieved and done in a multitude of manners.⁷³ Following this idea, Errol Francis in an opinion piece he wrote

⁷⁰ "Museums," UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, n.d., <https://en.unesco.org/themes/museums>.

⁷¹ Kelly Grovier, "Black Lives Matter Protests: Why Are Statues so Powerful?," June 12, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200612-black-lives-matter-protests-why-are-statues-so-powerful>.

⁷² Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post Colonial Era*, 2-19.

⁷³ "What Is Decolonization?," Abbe Museum Strategic Plan, n.d., <https://abbemuseum.wordpress.com/about-us/decolonization/>.

for the Museums Association, also listed concrete steps on how to effectively decolonize museums. He argues that accountability and careful monitoring are the ways in which museums can finally become postcolonial rather than colonial. He suggests creating an international register of artefacts which monitor the loaning, exchanges, and returns of colonial artefacts as well as the creation of programs that diversify the workforce.⁷⁴ Another perspective comes from Elisa Shoenberger as she mentions that a huge part of decolonizing museums is being aware of the unfairness of how museums in the past have treated indigenous groups and minorities in their collections. She also points out that the process of decolonization is manifested in different ways and through different progressions in each museum. She refers to the examples of the Abbe Museum and the Nordnorsk Museum which are museums that have both reviewed their mission statements and principles in the light of decolonization. The Abbe Museum even transparently informs its visitors that decolonization is part of its staff training and that the principles of decolonization are guiding the decisions of the museum.⁷⁵

These are only some perspectives on how decolonization in museums is proceeding. Despite the differences in approaches that scholars and museums are undertaking, what remains the same is the idea that the museums themselves, as meaning making institutions, are at the very center of this debate. The ways as to how decolonization proceeds in museums might differ from one museum to the next but what is important is the awareness of the museums and the professionals themselves that decolonization within the institution is an active choice that must be made continuously. Although some progress has been made in this regard, there are still some skeptical museum theorists who believe that decolonization in museums is impossible to fully achieve and that the rhetoric and call for change does not automatically equate to concrete change.⁷⁶

Research on the topic of decolonization in museums is quite varied. Considering that the type and manner of decolonization being highlighted here also comes with varied definitions from mixed opinions of scholars, it is therefore inevitable that the body of studies in this topic is

⁷⁴ Errol Francis, "It's Time All Museums Were Postcolonial," Museums Association, June 27, 2018, <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/opinion/2018/06/01072018-its-time-all-museums-were-post-colonial/#>.

⁷⁵ Elisa Shoenberger, "What Does It Mean to Decolonize a Museum?," Museum Next, September 18, 2020, <https://www.museumnext.com/article/what-does-it-mean-to-decolonize-a-museum/>.

⁷⁶Marstine, ed., "New Museum Theory and Practice : An Introduction", 25-27.

also quite diverse. This also means that a multitude of actors are both working for and at the same time are being affected by decolonization. The presence of multiple actors concerned also means that its effects can also be felt in a wide array of fields and not just exclusively in the cultural sectors. Most importantly, the effects and benefits of decolonization can be seen in the political arena just as clearly. As Wintle's research argues, museums and the artefacts themselves reflect wider political change but also show agency in terms of the processes of decolonization.⁷⁷ This research also points out that just as the former colonizing powers are a huge part of the process of decolonization, the role of the (ex) colonies are just as important, maybe even more so. Museums in the process of active decolonization, serve as a setting for the voices and agendas of the former colonies' to be heard. This then means that decolonization specifically when it comes to the setting of the museum requires equal footing and understanding between the parties of the former colonizer and the former colonies. It should then be noted that the level as to which decolonization has been addressed largely varies depending on the former colonizing power and the former colony as some countries are more open about their colonial pasts than others.

Underexplored Areas of Research

This research situates itself in the body of work of postcolonialism specifically as a research that looks into the decolonization of museums in contemporary Europe by looking at the Dutch case study.

Considering the scope of the colonial past, literature that embodies postcolonialism also covers huge geographic ground. As mentioned in the critiques of postcolonial theory, contemporary research which employs it is quite varied in nature. Postcolonial theory has been used in research in a multitude of fields such as health research, migration, terrorism and education to name a few. Even though these fields are varied, most past research focuses on the alterity of the former colonies. There is also the tendency to focus on the former colonized and how they are still being affected by colonial influences that are too entrenched in societal structures. Systematic oppression and unfairness born out of colonial influences which the former colonized are still experiencing are usually highlighted. An example of this can be seen in

⁷⁷ Claire Wintle, "Decolonizing the Museum : The Case of the Imperial and Commonwealth Institutes," *Museum & Society* 11, no. 2 (2013): 185–200.

Rivas' dissertation concerning educational discourse analysis that sees postcolonial theory as a perspective that highlights intellectual oppression and marginalization⁷⁸ as well as in Mohamed Selina's work which looks at a postcolonial approach in health research to avoid injustices and stereotyping.⁷⁹

As can be seen from past literature, postcolonialism focuses on the idea of the Other, specifically in ways in which the Other is being dominated by influences of colonial rule. In this regard, this theory is relevant to studies pertaining to museums where the Other is visibly being showcased through tangible culture.⁸⁰ Specifically for this research, this theory was chosen as a tool to look at how museums as meaning making institutions and acting custodians of colonially acquired objects which are still dominated by the dominant culture, are trying to answer ethical questions surrounding their collections. The questions of ownership, proper preservation, and giving space to the proper interpretation of the Other's culture, are being highlighted. This quality of postcolonial theory is an important lens that this research uses in order to gain a better understanding of the complexities and power struggles that surround colonial objects in European possession. This research is focused on using this theory as a tool to look at the developments being made by a former colonizing power by looking at the case study of the Netherlands, specifically in the setting of Dutch museums with colonial collections. The main thought of the theory is kept in mind in terms of looking at how colonial born influences and thoughts are being challenged as showcased in the case study.

Considering the richness of the way decolonization and in particular the decolonization in museums have been defined, it is therefore not a surprise that the literature surrounding it is quite abundant and varied. As was mentioned before, criticisms continue to revolve around the uncertainty and ambiguity of how to go about the process of decolonization. Scholars and museum practitioners are still in the process of defining these terms as past literature focused on different definitions of decolonization depending on where and how they were being undertaken.

⁷⁸ Araceli Rivas, "Postcolonial Analysis of Educational Research Discourse : Creating (Mexican) American Children as the 'Other'" (Texas A&M University, 2005).

⁷⁹ Selina Mohammed, "Moving Beyond the 'Exotic' : Applying Postcolonial Theory in Health Research," *ANS Advances in Nursing Science* 29, no. 2 (2006): 98–109.

⁸⁰ Tracy M. Jackson, review of *The Postcolonial Museum: The Arts of Memory and the Pressures of History*, by Chambers, De Angelis, Ianniciello, Orabona and Quadraro, *The University of Chicago Press*, 85, no.3 (July 2015): 328-330. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/681614>.

This therefore means that there continues to be space for new research not just in terms of how decolonization must be done in particular places, but more importantly to generally see how decolonization is being done on a concrete level through a case study.

Taking these gaps in literature into account, this research aims to contribute to the body of research in both postcolonial theory and decolonization by looking at the current situation of decolonization of museums in the Netherlands to see how a former colonizing country is dealing with calls for decolonization in museums and what specific values and factors they may be using to guide them in this process. By looking at this, this research aims to pinpoint how the Netherlands is developing in terms of decolonizing its museums and confronting its colonial past by looking at the viewpoint of museum professionals themselves.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Data Gathering Process: Key Informant Interviews

This research is qualitative in nature as it aims to answer the research question: How is the Netherlands developing in terms of decolonizing its museums and confronting its colonial past by looking into the possibility of restitution of colonial objects in its possession? In order to answer this question, data gathering was done through conducting Key Informant Interviews with participants that work in the museum and cultural field in the Netherlands. These participants have first-hand knowledge on the specific topic of decolonization of Dutch museums and are aware of the discussions surrounding the restitution of colonial objects in Dutch possession. Key Informant Interviews were chosen because of the depth that this type of interview provides. They are qualitative in nature and are usually used to obtain descriptions of both perceptions and experiences.⁸¹

This research looks into the key informant interviews of four participants who hold various positions in different institutions and programs that deal with Dutch colonial collections in one way or another. As this topic is more alive in the academic and museum circles, the four chosen participants are therefore people who directly deal with this topic in their line of work. The participants were chosen because of their profession, the institution they work for, as well as their knowledge and awareness of the discussions concerning the decolonization of Dutch museums through the possibility of restitution. It is important for this research that the participants are knowledgeable on the importance of the research topic. This is then the reason why key informant interviews were conducted rather than surveys or purposive sampling as this data gathering process honors the sensitivity of the topic and at the same time acknowledges that the debate of this topic is mostly happening in the academic, political, and museum circles rather than among the masses at present.

The interview schedule was developed with open-ended questions and were informal in nature. This gave space for both the interviewer and the interviewee to have a discussion with follow up questions that depended on the direction of the interview. Taking into consideration that this research was written during the COVID-19 pandemic, all the interviews were done

⁸¹*Key Informant Interview Handbook* (University of Washington, n.d.), 3-5.

online either through virtual interviews with the help of online platforms or through written email interviews. These interviews were recorded, transcribed, and used with the permission of the participants. The variety of professions of the participants ensure that the perspectives will be varied and their answers will reflect wider ground in terms of how decolonization and restitution in the Netherlands is taking place and should be taking place. A table of the participants and their information has been provided below.

Table of Participants

Participant	Institution	Position
1. Arjen Dijkstra	University Museum Groningen (Rijksmuseum Groningen)	Director Adviser to the board of the University of Groningen (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen)
2. Arjen Uijterlinde	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken) International Cultural Policy Unit (ICE) (Eenheid Internationaal Cultuurbeleid (ICE)	Ambassador for Culture and Cooperation
3. Jona Mooren	NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (Instituut voor Oorlogs-, Holocaust- en	Art History Researcher at of the Expert Centre Restitution of NIOD

	Genocidestudies) Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects from the Colonial Era (PPROCE)	Senior Researcher and one of the Project leaders of the PPROCE project
4. Rosalie Hans	National Museum of World Cultures (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen NMVW)	Provenance Researcher General

As demonstrated in the table above, the participants come from different institutions and hold very different positions from one another. Taking note of these differences is important in order to gain a better understanding of where the participants' perspectives are coming from. Taking this into consideration, short backgrounds on the institutions and positions of the participants are provided:

Arjen Dijkstra is the director of the University Museum Groningen and an adviser to the board of the University. The University Museum itself has been around since 1934 and has a wide range of collections that are scientific, historical, and ethnological in nature.⁸² The University Museum holds an ethnological collection of more than 8000 objects from around the world. It's ethnological collection is divided into four large component collections: The Van Baaren Collection, The Collection Museum Prinsessehof Leeuwarden, Collection 'Koloniaal Landbouwmuseum' Deventer, and the Collection Museum 'Gerardus van der Leeuw' Groningen. The objects in these collections come from everywhere in the globe. Notably from the South Pacific, Indonesia, New Guinea, West and Central Africa, and North and South America. These collections also came into the possession of the University Museum in different ways. A

⁸² "University Museum," University of Groningen, accessed July 3, 2020, <https://www.rug.nl/university-museum/?lang=en>.

considerable amount of the objects however came into the hands of the University Museum because of the closure of other ethnographic museums such as the Museum of Ethnography Gerardus van der Leeuw in 2003.⁸³ Arjen Dijkstra was chosen as a participant because of his position as the director of the University Museum which has a considerable amount of ethnographic objects that are of colonial origin. He therefore gives the perspective of a museum director who has to deal with colonial collections on a daily basis as a part of his profession and whose opinion should be given account to in terms of how colonial objects should be handled and what is the state of affairs in the Netherlands at present.

Arjen Uijterlinde is the Ambassador for International Cultural Cooperation of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He is involved in policy making with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is also a representative of the government. His position was created in 1980 as a more focused response to international cultural policy. His line of work is focused on the many forms of cultural diplomacy and in the idea that culture is a powerful tool in foreign relations and creates opportunities for dialogue and social change both in and out of the Netherlands.⁸⁴ He therefore works closely with other ministries and other actors within the governmental sphere. Arjen Uijterlinde was chosen as a participant because of his unique position as the Ambassador for International Cultural Cooperation. His position requires him to listen to actors both in the government and in the cultural field and he has also been involved in the return of cultural and archaeological objects in the past, with the most recent one being in May 2021.⁸⁵ Because of his position, he gives the perspective of a representative of the government who is mindful of the developments in the Dutch museum community and at the same time is informed of how these developments will affect the Netherlands and the country's international cultural policy.

Jona Mooren is an art history researcher at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies and is also one of the project leaders of the Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects from the Colonial Era (PPOCE). The PPOCE is a project that is jointly done by

⁸³ "Ethnological Collections," University Museum, accessed July 3, 2021, <https://www.rug.nl/university-museum/collections/ethnological/>.

⁸⁴ "Special Appointments," Government of the Netherlands, accessed July 3, 2021, <https://www.government.nl/ministries/ministry-of-foreign-affairs/organisational-structure/special-appointments>.

⁸⁵ "The Netherlands Is Cooperating in the Return of Archaeological Objects to Iraq," *Information and Heritage Inspectorate (Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science)*, May 6, 2021, <https://english.inspectie-oe.nl/publications/publication/2021/05/06/the-netherlands-is-cooperating-in-the-return-of-archaeological-objects-to-iraq>.

the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the NMVW, and NIOD with the aim of developing the proper methods and steps for provenance research on colonial collections.⁸⁶ She stated in her interview that she is speaking on behalf of the PPROCE which means that she and the PPROCE do not take a formal position on the ethical complexities of the issue and that she answers the questions according to the observations of the PPROCE. Jona Mooren was chosen as a participant because of her position as a project leader of the PPROCE project which is one of the projects being lauded as an important step towards provenance research that can lead to the possibility of restitution. She brings in the perspective of a project leader who is one of the people actively involved in the talks of how to do provenance research as well as how to properly handle colonial objects especially considering how much provenance research has been emphasized by the advisory report.

Rosalie Hans is a provenance researcher general in the NMVW (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen / The National Museum of World Cultures). The NMVW is a group of Dutch museums consisting of the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, The Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, and the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal. Rosalie Hans has a museological background and her position in the NMVW came as an outcome of the publication of the NMVW's Principles and Process for addressing claims for the Return of Cultural Objects in 2019. These guidelines were being prepared since 2017 and were recently published publicly as the NMVW's official document entitled, Return of Cultural Objects: Principles and Process on March 4, 2019.⁸⁷ This document was created as a guide and as a proof of the NMVW's commitment to transparency in terms of the evaluation of claims for the return of colonial objects that are within its possession which is an estimate of about 450,000 items.⁸⁸ The document has been mostly received with positive feedback, with the UNESCO Courier even calling the NMVW's move "ahead of the curve" in terms of the discourse about decolonization and repatriation.⁸⁹ Rosalie Hans was hired as provenance researcher general in order to help the NMVW in responding to potential claims

⁸⁶ NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, "Pilot Project Provenance Research on Objects of the Colonial Era (PPROCE)," niod, accessed June 23, 2021, <https://www.niod.nl/en/projects/pilotproject-provenance-research-objects-colonial-era-pproce>.

⁸⁷ Hickley, "The Netherlands: Museums Confront the Country's Colonial Past."

⁸⁸ "Return of Colonial Objects : Principles and Process" (Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, March 7, 2019), <https://www.volkenkunde.nl/sites/default/files/2019-05/Claims%20for%20Return%20of%20Cultural%20Objects%20NMVW%20Principles%20and%20Process.pdf>.

⁸⁹ Hickley, "The Netherlands: Museums Confront the Country's Colonial Past."

and in implementing the guidelines that they just published. She was chosen as a participant because of her work in provenance research in the NMVW whose guidelines for restitution have been praised.⁹⁰ In her position, she is one of the people who are active participants in provenance research in the Netherlands. She also stated in her interview that she is speaking from a place of a museum professional and not as a representative of the NMVW.

Research Methodology: Thematic Analysis and Qualitative Analysis

Once the interviews were done, these were then transcribed for easier analysis. This research aims to identify recurring ideas and notable themes across the data sets and to further investigate the meanings that lie behind them. In order to do this, thematic analysis will first be done in order to describe and pinpoint the common thread/s across the data sets. After which, qualitative analysis will be done to further analyze these commonalities as well as the extracts and themes that may have stood out.

This research is inspired, but does not completely follow Braun and Clarke's model of thematic analysis. This model is a specific qualitative analytic method that deals with the search of themes and patterns in a data set.⁹¹ Thematic analysis reports patterns within the data provided and it has proven to be a helpful tool in describing data sets in rich detail. This type of analysis has however been criticized for not having specific guidelines as the steps largely depend on the researcher and what the research is trying to find. Thematic analysis is also not bound to any fixed theoretical framework. This gives thematic analysis a level of flexibility which makes it a unique research method. It grants a lot of freedom to the researcher as well as a lot of space for the data to speak for itself. The researcher can go back and forth the data set as many times as it is deemed necessary but must be wary of when to stop.⁹²

As there are no specific steps that dictate how to strictly do thematic analysis, this research will use Braun and Clarke's phases of thematic analysis as a guide. It is worth noting that these phases only serve as a flexible outline and are not to be considered strict rules of thematic analysis especially because this method requires an analysis that is recursive rather than

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

⁹² Braun and Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology", 77-101.

linear. This means that going back and forth between the data sets is normal and in some cases encouraged.⁹³ The phases of thematic analysis that will be done in this research are as follows: familiarizing with the data sets through transcription of the interviews and careful reading of the transcripts, the answers of the participants are then read per question and data extracts that stand out such as phrases, sentences, or words are taken note of and are assigned codes pertaining to what their meanings are, these codes are then compared in order to pinpoint similar themes or answers, once these themes are identified these will then be analyzed further. Since thematic analysis is quite descriptive in nature, another research methodology was chosen in order to delve deeper into the analysis of the data. Once the common themes have been identified, qualitative analysis will be done to understand where these commonalities are coming from and what they may mean in connection to the bigger social context.

Qualitative Analysis is a type of analysis that looks into qualitative non-numerical data. For this research, this comes in the form of textual data from interview transcripts. Considering the textual nature of the data, it is therefore important to do a comprehensive readthrough of the transcripts to isolate themes and expressions in order to properly do qualitative analysis. This method relies heavily on the researcher's analytic skill of the social context of the research and gives emphasis on "sense making" or the understanding of certain phenomena rather than predicting.⁹⁴ This is usually most effectively done through thorough fieldwork and observation. Unfortunately, field work is not a possibility during the writing of this thesis and I therefore had to rely on the interview transcripts as the main source of data. This research acknowledges that fieldwork would have given a more holistic analysis but at the same time also appreciates the chance to explore a way of doing this type of analysis based solely on textual data.

This research methodology was chosen because of the depth and specificity that it allows. Since this research is concerned with looking into the Dutch case study, it is important to choose a method that takes into consideration the context that comes along with the data. Qualitative Analysis gives the possibility to understand latent meanings that are embedded in the data by making sense of both the words that have been said and the context that these words may have come from. This method reveals complexities behind words and gives emphasis on local

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ "Qualitative Analysis," in *Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Creative Commons License, n.d.), <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-research-methods/chapter/chapter-13-qualitative-analysis/>.

meanings and perceptions by connecting them to the social world. This therefore means that focus is given to the participants and the meaning of their words that can be pinpointed both explicitly and implicitly.⁹⁵

This type of analysis can be done in a variety of approaches. This research was inspired but does not exclusively follow Miles and Huberman's set of analytical moves for qualitative analysis.⁹⁶ The analysis of data for this research revolves around the careful reading of the transcripts. By doing this, reflections and other remarks were then generated and certain data extracts and outlying messages that stood out were noted. Considering that the amount of data in the transcripts can be overwhelmingly large, sorting through the material to recognize similarities in words, phrases, and messages between the participants' answers is of utmost importance. Thematic analysis was done in order to isolate the similarities across the data sets which can be seen as a new wave of data collection. Once the thread of similar ideas and the differences in answers have been pinpointed, generalizations will be made following the logic of the answers. Lastly, these generalizations will then be situated in larger existing discussions in order to make sense of where the data lies in the big picture of the existing social context. This research method was chosen as a tool to look at Dutch development in terms of how to handle colonial objects and the discussion of restitution through the lens of those who are actively involved in the debate. Analyzing the answers of these participants will give a more grounded and realistic answer to the research question in terms of seeing Dutch development.

The differences among the participants' backgrounds and institutions have been highlighted in this chapter. This research respects the dissimilarities between the participants and take these into consideration as they show the complexity of the Dutch position as well as the complexity of the debate itself. The contrast between the participants' answers can be explained through the lens of positionality which states that identity is dynamic and is affected by social and historical changes. Positionality also points out that the context in which people live and work is important to examine in order to understand one's perspective.⁹⁷ It is also the understanding that both external and internal factors such as personal views and one's location in

⁹⁵Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Second (United States of America: SAGE Publications Inc., 1994), 10.

⁹⁶ Miles and Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 10-16.

⁹⁷Adrianna Kezar and Jaime Lester, "Breaking the Barrier of Essentialism in Leadership Research: Positionality as a Promising Approach," *Feminist Formations* 22, no. 1 (2010): 163-85, <https://doi.org/10.1353/nwsa.0.0121>.

time and space influence someone's perception of the world.⁹⁸This is why information about the participants' backgrounds were given in order to establish context of where the participants' views are coming from and therefore what their priorities might be. This also ties in with the research method of qualitative analysis which gives emphasis on grounding the meanings behind the participants' words into the wider social context.

⁹⁸Barney Warf, ed., "Positionality," in *Encyclopedia of Geography* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc., 2010).

VI. ANALYSIS

The transcripts of the interviews serve as the main textual data of this research. The principles of thematic analysis were used as a guide in order to pinpoint similarities across the data sets. However, it is important to recognize that not all the participants will agree on certain points. Differences between answers are therefore normal and expected considering the individual differences of the participants. As the concept of positionality points out, the differences that have come up stem from the idea that the participants come from different institutions and are therefore shaped by different social contexts. Beyond the similarities, it is interesting to take note of the stark variation in answers as well as the striking data extracts that can give another perspective to the research. By virtue of this, both the similarities and the differences in answers are given attention to. It should also be kept in mind that the interviews were structured in such a way where both the interviewer and the interviewee were able to speak openly which enabled both to return to already mentioned ideas or reiterate certain answers. This then means that it is important not only to look at the similarities and differences between the answers in specific questions but more importantly to look at the overall tone and ideas of each participant in their interviews.

Through careful reading of the transcripts, as well as following the approach of thematic analysis, certain recurring themes have been identified across the data sets. Several themes stood out across the interviews of the participants where some were given more emphasis than others. These topics were common ideas that were brought up by all or most of the participants during their interviews and were therefore taken note of. In order to gain more clarity on the context of why these themes were similar between the participants' answers, deeper analysis will be done by looking at these themes in clearer detail through qualitative analysis. Data extracts in the form of quotations were lifted from the interviews of the participants to better illustrate their ideas. The similar themes across the interviews are the following: the importance of provenance research, the importance of having a well established legal framework or policy that will facilitate the way colonial objects are to be handled as well as facilitate the process of restitution itself if deemed possible (with this also comes the importance of the approval of parliament concerning the Minister's request), the existence of complexities surrounding the colonial objects themselves, the idea that a stronger sense of responsibility and moral obligation must be the

driving intentions behind Dutch steps in relation to the source countries specifically with former colonies, the importance of cooperation and dialogue between the Netherlands and the source countries, that certain Dutch steps and actors can be considered as forerunners, and that development, whether that is in the form of restitution or not, is still quite slow from the Dutch side.

Although all of the participants agreed on certain points, they however have different reasonings in order to come to these conclusions. This means that even though the participants may share the same general idea of Dutch development in this debate at present, the definitions and factors that make up this general idea are very different from one another. A noticeable theme that was seen across all the data sets is the theme of provenance research and its importance to the debate of handling colonial objects in Dutch possession. All the participants used the term “provenance research” or the phrase “research into provenance” all throughout their interviews. The term provenance research in this context refers to the in depth research of the histories and backgrounds of the colonial objects in order to pinpoint where they come from and from which community they may be associated with. The repeated use of these words also illustrates that the term provenance research is an important jargon and theme in the Dutch debate concerning the handling of colonial objects. Beyond just using the buzzword provenance research, all the participants also cited its importance when it comes to figuring out how the Netherlands should proceed.

The strongest idea that was similar in all the interviews is that provenance research is the most urgent important step that must be made regardless of the challenges that surround its specifics. Each participant however differed in terms of citing what these challenges are, why provenance research must be done, and what questions provenance research will answer in order to move forward. All things considered, the general idea of what needs to be done and the existence of challenges in terms of provenance research and restitution follows a united thread but the details surrounding this general idea differs from one participant to the next depending on their profession and institution’s concerns. This can be seen in the data extracts and analysis that are provided below:

For Arjen Dijkstra, provenance research is essential in making sure that objects that have valid claims for restitution will not simply be returned but more importantly, be returned to the proper parties. This can be seen in his quote:

“The thing that is by far the most important is that objects don’t end up in the wrong hands...if these claims are valid, they should be researched and if the research is conclusive they should be returned or we should be very careful that they don’t go to the wrong people.”

Dijkstra, as the director of the university museum which holds huge ethnographical collections, is open to the discussion of restitution of these objects. For him, the biggest challenge in this situation is how to deal with these objects respectfully and with recognition. His concern lies in the objects that are in his words “collecting dust” in storage facilities. He recognizes the richness of his collections but at the same time questions why certain objects (whether they have been proven involuntarily dispossessed or not) are in these storage facilities when they could be more appreciated by other communities.

“I think there are ethical questions that can be asked. They (the cultural objects) may have been made for European collectors by some of the most skilled artists from the region but still, do they belong in a storage facility in Groningen or do they nowadays belong in Indonesia or somewhere in Africa or the Philippines.”

Dijkstra also mentions a quote by Indiana Jones to further illustrate his perspective. This can be seen in his quote: “Indiana Jones, he said, this belongs in a museum. He’s wrong! It doesn’t belong in a museum, it belongs to the people who actually made it and their descendants.” This extract shows Dijkstra’s openness as well as his critique towards the idea that colonial objects that have found themselves in museums far from their source countries should be preserved in museums. At the core of his interview, Dijkstra laments the lack of real discussion in terms of the entirety of the situation as most of the discussions seem to only concern the high profile contested objects. He does however recognize the Dutch efforts but believes that more can be done. For him, provenance research is important not only to determine whether the objects

have been involuntarily dispossessed or not, but more importantly to give them back to the proper parties that will appreciate them and learn from them more instead of only having them in storage facilities. From his perspective, provenance research answers the question of where should these objects go in order to be appreciated by the proper parties? He also recognizes that pinpointing the provenance of these objects can be a long process considering that these objects have difficult histories. This does not mean however that provenance research is impossible, in fact this is all the more reason to do it, in order to know where and with who these objects should be with. His frustration can be seen in this quote:

“It really is embarrassing how we deal with this. If we could spend just a few hundred million Euros, we can solve this problem. We could put an army of researchers on it, we could build some of the nicest instruments in the world where you could actually find the provenance of all these objects, have a proper discussion, perhaps what would be the best solution is to organize joint exhibits...but all of this is not going on. What we do is we create committees where experts validate or dismiss claims on only the most high profile contested objects.”

Arjen Uijterlinde views provenance research and improving research capacity as important activities. Although he recognizes the importance of provenance research, his interview reflects more upon the importance of creating a dialogue between the Netherlands and the source countries. As a representative of the government, his approach towards the situation is more geared towards finding a way to compromise the wants and voices of the different actors involved. For him, provenance research must be done in order to see how cooperation can be coordinated between countries. This cooperation does not only come in the form of restitution but also in other ways such as digitizing collections and creation of museum structures in the name of storytelling, education, and increasing accessibility to these objects. His view on the situation goes beyond restitution and more towards other cooperation efforts through joint programs with other countries. He recognizes that restitution is a part of the situation but it is not the whole situation itself. We see this in the following quotes:

“We focus very much on restitution but it's also important to put it into a wider frame of how we can cooperate, build capacity, and work together in making collections accessible.”

“We understand that one thing is where should the object be, the other thing is how can it be maximally preserved and made accessible for a wider public.”

He admits that this is one of the most common arguments usually given by Western museums in terms of the idea of restituting objects and it can be seen that he has more hesitations in terms of restitution. This hesitation can be traced back to the complexities that he enumerated during his interview which revolved around the logistics of how exactly restitution and provenance research should be done. For him, the complexities lie in the differences between cultures and perspectives between the countries involved which is why he believes that the best way to approach the situation is through dialogue. This is also why he emphasized the importance of the approval of parliament on the Minister's requests for a full pledged policy as this will give a basis and a guideline that can be followed. For him, what is important is having equal footing and having both parties reach a compromise in order for both parties to truly benefit. He recognizes that restitution is an act of justice and that the bias should be that if a source country puts forward a claim, then the Netherlands must be ready and able to retribute. However, he also cites that these objects that have been in Dutch possession for quite some time can also be seen as a part of Dutch culture to a certain extent and therefore can also hold meaning to the Dutch population. He recognizes the importance of provenance research and the continued effort of it but he is more focused on establishing dialogues with the source countries to create joint steps together in the future and these steps may or may not include total restitution of all the objects. From his perspective, provenance research answers the question of how exactly do we move forward with the source countries and whether these source countries desire to have their objects restituted and if so, which ones. His answers reflect the desire to situate the discussion in a wider frame that is not only focused on restitution but more so on compromise and joint action. These can be seen in the data extracts below:

“The object originated from a country but the object also traveled through time and accumulated parts of history that also made it heritage and also gave it a sense of connection and belonging to the places where it went just like people who emigrate. They have an origin but they take more identities. They may have conflicts where their identities belong and whether you could still speak from an Indonesian or a Dutch identity or has it become more like a world identity.”

“I think the bottom line is you need to sit at a table and come together with a positive attitude in terms of where you want, what is your goal, and where do you want to come, that’s not to return everything lock stock and barrel but to get dialogue and to see where would be the right place for that.”

Rosalie Hans, as a provenance researcher general, sees provenance research as a big part of the process of decolonizing museums. For her, provenance research is essential as she sees this as the foundation that needs to be laid in order to begin a conversation about these objects with the countries involved. Provenance research in this regard, helps in the creation or continuation of dialogue. For Hans, caring for not only the object but also the people surrounding the object is the role of the museum. Provenance research is therefore vital not only as a first step but also as a guide to know how to properly care for these objects whether that is through restitution, and how that restitution must therefore take place. Hans sees complexities in how exactly museums can do diligence and justice in respect to the objects themselves, especially considering that there are a lot of actors surrounding the issue. She talked about the increased awareness of the colonial past both in the public and museum spheres which can be seen in the Black Lives Matter movement and how this shift has increased efforts and discussions.

Considering that her profession requires her to work with these objects themselves and she does provenance research herself, her interview reflected her concern for these objects and what could be and should be done in order to care for them. She also cautioned that extreme views on the issue of these objects can overlook a lot of the sensitivities surrounding this issue which is why dialogue with the parties involved is important. Provenance research for her answers the question of how can these cultural objects be properly taken care of?

“I think the job is to have that care. We care for objects, that’s what museums do and we care for the people. We should care for the people that surround the objects and that’s essential to it. That’s the whole point of the museum. So if we didn’t do that even for objects that are going to leave the museum, then we would miss out on something.”

Jona Mooren’s interview was shorter in comparison to the other transcripts as the interview was conducted through email. She is also speaking on behalf of the PPROCE which she mentioned a couple of times in her interview. This means that she and the PPROCE do not take a formal position on the ethical complexities of the issue but she does however answer the questions according to the observations of the PPROCE. She makes this perspective clear by using the subject pronoun ‘we’. Provenance research was also an important theme of her interview. She referred to the increasing awareness in Dutch museums concerning their own colonial histories as a driving force of provenance research. This can be seen in this data extract:

“We notice, however, that Dutch museums are becoming increasingly aware of the question whether it is fair and just to manage objects that have come into their collections as colonial acquisitions. In answering this question, it is of crucial importance to know the provenance of such objects.“

Provenance research is therefore essential in order for museums with colonial objects to answer questions of how to handle these objects or if it is even something that these museums should be handling in the name of social responsibility. It was also mentioned that provenance research also helps in answering the question of which objects qualify for restitution. Certain complexities of provenance research were also cited in the interview such as the partly inherited colonial principles based on how the collections have been acquired, the one-sidedness of the source materials because of colonial history, and the different cultural and political meanings of the objects as can be seen through the eyes of the former colonizing countries and the former colonized ones. By enumerating these challenges, the sensitivities surrounding the objects are being highlighted as well as the sense of urgency that the Netherlands seem to be experiencing as reflected in the publishing of the NMVW guidelines as well as the Minister’s requests. She also

mentioned that policy development comes naturally together with provenance research, in the name of fulfilling the Dutch's sense of responsibility. This can be seen in the data extracts below:

“Policy development is therefore inextricably linked to scientific research on provenance. Dutch museums consider research on the origins of museum collections to be a core task.”

“In consequence, there is a strong desire in the Netherlands, based on a sense of social responsibility, to do research on the problems facing – and the requirements for – the further development of provenance research on colonial collections.”

Aside from provenance research, all the participants also referred to the act and process of restitution in varying degrees. Some were more absolute than others in terms of seeing it as a viable option that can be explored. It is however worth noting that the participants referred to restitution as a step that is to be considered after provenance research or as a process that comes together with provenance research. This shows that the participants give more urgency to provenance research in comparison to restitution in the current state of the debate. Another point that was emphasized by all the participants is that there remains to be a lot of complexities that need to be figured out for both provenance research and restitution to properly happen. The participants all referred to restitution as a step that is not currently taking place and as more of a step that is situated more down the line. There is however an awareness of the possibility of restitution as a future for the colonial objects. Jona Mooren remarked “...although both politicians and museums feel the need for both research and policy guidelines, it might take some time before actual restitutions can take place.” In the same way, Rosalie Hans also said, “I think the terms of cases of restitution - we're not there yet.”

Another interesting detail is that most of the participants point out that there has been a shift in awareness from the Dutch side in terms of its colonial past that has been actively happening in the museum circles throughout the years. This shift and awareness has however taken up speed outside of the museum circles quite recently which is reflected in how the media has been broadcasting the different debates concerning this. The answers of the participants are however more focused on how this discussion and awareness of the colonial past has been an

important discussion in the museum circles for a while and that the Dutch developments that can be seen today can be attributed to the years long discussions within. Arjen Dijkstra comments on this by saying, “What has happened and I think that’s what you recognize, is that there’s been a switch in both public opinion and the opinion of experts on this.”. Jona Mooren, on the other hand, focused her answer on the shift that can be seen from the side of the Dutch museums themselves. This can be seen in the data extract:

“From the beginning of the twenty-first century, parallel also to a reinterpretation of (the function/meaning of) old ethnographical museums/collections, Dutch museums and officials have become more sensitive to their colonial legacies. In recent years many steps were taken in the Netherlands concerning research and policy on objects from the colonial era.”

Following the same idea, Rosalie Hans also commented:

“...We’ve also been talking about how bad our memories are about this so the media can present this as something new but if you look at for example the discussion with Indonesia there was discussion that happened from the moment of independence and back in the 70s and back in the 90s.”

The participants were also wary of embodying the idea that the Netherlands is a “forerunner” in terms of dealing with colonial objects. Arjen Dijkstra outright disagrees with this and reiterates that the Netherlands should put in more effort for it to be considered a forerunner. This can be seen in the data extract:

“Are the Dutch leading the way here? No, we are not. We're showing a way to frustrate the process. I think. We would be leading the way if we would truly invest into research on a large scale and I mean a truly large scale so that’s not like a dozen researches or something like that. It should be bigger than that. It should also be more focused on working towards a working relationship with people across the world. Stuff like this is happening obviously, we are doing it. But it's not enough.”

Arjen Uijterlinde specifically pinpoints the Dutch museum community to be at the forefront of this issue in terms of putting the issue in the spotlight as well as developing frameworks.

“The museum and the professional community in the Netherlands, they have been among the frontliners in putting this item into the agenda internationally and also in taking the lead in creating some framework or some principles.”

While both Hans and Mooren referred to the recent developments such as the NMVW’s published guidelines, the PPROCE project, and the anticipated legal framework that is currently waiting for parliament’s approval as steps that can be considered as forerunners. The participants recognize the efforts and that several museums and institutions are taking steps that are innovative in their own rights but this does not mean however that the Netherlands as a whole is in this position at present. There are still a lot of challenges that need to be addressed such as a policy or a legal mechanism that will guide countries to put forward claims and guide the process of restitution itself. Three out of the four participants referred to the approval of parliament of the Minister’s request for policy development and provenance research mechanisms as an essential step that is waiting to be taken in order to see concrete movement forward. This can be seen in this data extract from Jona Mooren’s interview:

“Being a forerunner is one thing, developing a well thought-out and balanced policy that can be of value for decades is another. That might be time-consuming and in conflict with the forerunner position.”

VII. DISCUSSION

To answer the research question, how has the Netherlands developed in terms of decolonizing its museums and confronting its colonial past by looking into the possibility of restitution of colonial objects in its possession? The Netherlands has developed in terms of not only being aware of its colonial past but also trying to take concrete steps to confront this colonial past. The notable efforts and consequent developments are however more prominently seen from the side of the Dutch museums, specifically those that have colonial collections. From the participants' interviews, some concrete steps that can be considered as development have been highlighted such as the carrying out of provenance research and the request of the Minister for a national policy framework. Both of these steps cater to the concerns surrounding the debate on colonial objects where the act of doing provenance research is a concrete step towards answering ethical concerns such as who the objects belong to and which community should we reach out to? While the request of the Minister can be seen as a start in terms of answering the legal questions surrounding restitution and the objects themselves. All things considered, these highlighted steps by the participants were born out of an increased colonial awareness and therefore a stronger sense of social responsibility from the Dutch side which has resulted in developments centered around the idea of giving space to colonial narratives that have been silenced as well as righting colonial injustices.

There was a consensus among the participants that the ethical concerns surrounding these objects should not be overlooked. All participants, one way or another, talked about these concerns and what they mean to them in their professions. The reasons as to why these ethical concerns are important may be different from one participant to the next but there is an agreement that the ethical concerns are important to consider in order to move forward. With this belief comes the idea that provenance research is one of the most pressing actions that must be done in order to make sense of these concerns in a mutually beneficial way between the Netherlands and the source countries involved. Learning more about the objects themselves and making sense of the hundreds of thousands of colonial objects in Dutch possession is the first step. At the moment of writing this research, the provenance of the majority of the colonial objects in Dutch possession are still undetermined and the Netherlands still does not have set principles or guidelines on what to do with said objects once their provenance has been brought

to light. Provenance research and the creation of these principles after provenance research has been done will inevitably be slow because of the sheer amount of objects there are, as well as the lack of an established way of doing provenance research as of yet. There are still concerns as to how exactly provenance research should be conducted, how many researchers are needed, as well as the financial toll that this will entail. These are only some of the practicalities that the Netherlands is facing and will continue to face in the future. Together with provenance research, the creation or continuation of dialogue between the Netherlands and the source countries comes naturally as part of the process.

Through provenance research, the Netherlands is making the effort of learning the history of these objects in order to know whether they have been involuntarily dispossessed or not and to also develop the proper mechanisms that will ensure that they will be handled with sensitivity in any case. The idea of social responsibility and righting of colonial injustices where there are any, are at the core of the creation of projects that embody provenance research. Provenance research offers clarity for both the Netherlands and the source countries considering that in certain cases the source countries may not be even aware of the existence or loss of these objects. By learning the provenance of these colonial objects, specifically where they come from and how they have come under Dutch possession, the Netherlands is not only uncovering colonial stories but at the same time is also being given the chance to confront both the good and the bad parts of its own colonial past. To know for certain that some colonial objects have been looted does not give the Netherlands a lot of space to deny past colonial injustices and hopefully with this comes humble acknowledgement of these lootings and injustices. Provenance research shows the histories of these objects just as much as it gives way to proper understanding of how to handle them with sensitivity.

Together with provenance research, the participants also referred to the request of the Minister for the creation of a national policy framework specifically concerning the colonial collections in the Netherlands. All of the participants mentioned this to varying degrees and some of them pointed out that this will speed up a lot of the processes and will also give the source countries a clear path as to how they can put up requests for restitution and start a dialogue. If this request pushes through, a lot of future confusion can be avoided and the source countries or communities will have a clearer idea as to how they can proceed in the name of equal footing and

cooperation. This is why the approval of parliament has been emphasized by the participants. In this way, we can see that the ethical concerns serve as a catalyst for Dutch action in terms of creating concrete steps. This can also be seen in how the advisory report that has been put forward to the Minister is centered around the idea of not just recognizing colonial injustices but more importantly, correcting them as well. The advisory report as well as the request of the Minister reflect the awareness of the Netherlands when it comes to its social responsibility as well as what it finds value in when it comes to the talk of restitution.

At the moment of writing this research, there is no concrete legal framework yet and the Minister's proposal for the creation of a national policy framework is still pending for parliament's approval. This means that the legal aspects of this debate is at a temporary standstill until further notice. However, this does not mean that the whole debate has gone stagnant. On the contrary this has given the Netherlands the chance to focus more on the ethical aspects of the debate that continue to surround these colonial objects. This focus on the colonial past and the ethical concerns surrounding it can also be seen globally which was only further made obvious by the popularity of the Black Lives Matter movement. This movement highlighted the structural nature of racially motivated oppressions that were born from colonial influences and made way to an intensified awareness of the colonial past and just how much power harmful colonial influences continue to have in the modern world. To add to this, controversial colonial collections in European possession have also been brought to the spotlight as the nature of their acquisition are being questioned and calls for restitution are being put forward. An example of this controversial colonial collection is the Benin Bronzes of Nigeria whose pieces continue to be scattered all over museums in Europe where most of them are in former colonizing countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. All over the globe, countries and museums with colonial collections are starting to face their colonial legacies especially when it comes to their tangible collections.

As was pointed out by the participants, this increase in awareness of the colonial past has been an important discussion in the Dutch museum community for a couple of years already. It is through this awareness as well as the recognition of their social responsibility that museums were motivated to make sense of their own colonial legacies. The recent Dutch developments that the public has been seeing and the media has been picking up on are results of years of debate

among the museum circles as well as the increase of colonial awareness not only in the Netherlands but also all around the globe. It must be taken into consideration that these results were not achieved overnight and are effects of factors that are both internal and external. Outside the delay of the creation of a legal framework, other Dutch actors and museums have started to deal with these concerns in their own different ways. This can be seen in the NMVW's example of creating their own guiding principles for restitution and the creation of the PPROCE and Pressing Matters projects in the name of provenance research. From the interviews, we see that different professionals coming from different institutions have their own interpretations of how and why exactly these ethical concerns should be dealt with.

It should also be noted that the success of the Minister's request will also mean that the Netherlands will be one of, if not, the first former colonizing power to have such a mechanism. This will be a concrete and undeniable development. However, while this is pending, the discourse revolves more around making sense of the ethical concerns that have been brought up and figuring out how these concerns can be properly addressed in other ways. There continues to be differences in priorities that need to be compromised among the actors involved which also means that the act and discussion of restitution is a concern that is situated further down the line. A lot of mechanisms, conversations, and provenance research need to happen before the actual efforts of restitution can take place and concrete progress in restitution can be seen. As most of the participants pointed out, progress in this regard is slow and at certain points can be seen to be at a stand still. Bureaucracy and paperwork is a necessary evil that both the Netherlands and the source countries have to contend with especially once cases of restitution are to be considered. From certain perspectives, this can be seen as the Netherlands dragging its feet in terms of creating actions that will specifically address the problems at hand which was also pointed out by some of the participants. This was especially highlighted in Arjen Dijkstra's frustration in terms of the efforts or lack thereof in certain cases.

One thing that is noticeable in the Dutch bureaucratic system is the tendency to create committees for specific purposes. The advisory report presented to the Minister was in itself created by the Advisory Committee on the National Policy Framework for Colonial Collections and was created as a response to the request from the Committee for Education, Culture, and Science. Arjen Dijkstra and Rosalie Hans both highlighted the complexities that this may bring

not only in terms of creating possibilities to slow down the process through paperwork but also in terms of meeting the source countries halfway in a way that both parties will be able to meet with understanding. From an outsider's perspective the bureaucratic aspects from the Dutch side can be seen as a way of frustrating the process. However, it should also be taken into consideration that the sensitivities surrounding the colonial objects themselves entail careful consideration. As Rosalie Hans pointed out, doing right and bringing justice for these colonial objects is the museum's most important job. This however should be a point of caution since these tendencies can easily be misconstrued and even be used by other actors for their own gain, whether that is to frustrate the process or to stop it all together. This is why dialogue with the source countries is important, in order to meet in the middle and to have an honest conversation as to how things should proceed forward. The Netherlands does have a huge role in terms of directing the discussion of restitution but they must not be the lone actor in doing so. The source countries should be equal players in this discussion and should therefore be given the proper opportunities to voice out what they deem to be the right steps to proceed forward. Equal footing or even giving the source countries a bigger say in this regard can be seen as a way of righting colonial injustice, as exclusion in almost all aspects of society was a big part of the former colonies' injustice. Giving former colonies the space that they were once deprived of is to give recognition to their stories and to also prove that the once established colonial ideas that separate the colonizer and colonized, where the colonizer has always had the upper hand, are no longer valid.

Postcolonial theory at its heart analyzes the colonial born struggles that still exist in society today. It challenges these existing ideas and attitudes that have been born out of colonial influences no matter how subtle or explicit they may be. In this research we see this in the existence of a discourse and the increasing awareness of the Netherlands, especially in the museum and cultural circles, concerning the good and bad sides of their colonial past and how this is affecting the Dutch position. More colonial awareness is leading to more actors challenging once established colonial ideas of superiority and lack of blame for colonial injustices. We do not only see postcolonial theory but also the process of decolonization in the way that the once established system of thought concerning the colonial past such as seeing the Dutch colonial period as a "Golden Age" is being challenged. The stories of how these colonial objects got to Dutch soil and what they mean to the source countries are narratives that were

once disregarded over stories of colonial victories. However, the continued existence of challenges and hesitations concerning provenance research and restitution prove that there continues to be a power struggle in terms of how the Netherlands sees and wants to deal with the colonial past. Even though changes are happening in the museum circles, this does not erase the fact that they are not the only actors that are being touched by this debate. The sensitivities concerning the colonial past can be easily politicized in terms of being used as tools for nationalism and other ideologies which explains why this debate is of great sensitivity not only for the source countries but also for the Netherlands. This is also why the participants stressed the approval of parliament concerning the Minister's request for a policy framework as the decisions concerning this will ultimately show the Dutch position in consideration to the other actors involved and not just exclusively the Dutch museum community. It is one thing to be aware of the developments in the museum community and yet another to really see how big the influence of these colonial objects are to both the countries who hold them and their source countries. As Rosalie Hans pointed out, colonial objects are objects of power. They held power in the past and continue to do so at present. Where they are and where they are not, hold certain meanings and even political sway. Ultimately, restitution is not just the act of giving back certain objects. This action has meaning for both the source countries and the Netherlands. Meanings that may continue to hold colonial tenor.

Beyond the increase of colonial awareness also exists the desire to right colonial injustices as was mentioned by the participants. The very existence of these colonial objects in Dutch possession, especially those that have been proven involuntarily dispossessed, stand as evidence of unjust colonial crimes that have not been given enough attention in the past. A big part of the process of decolonization is giving space to unheard colonial narratives not just for the purpose of visibility but also to achieve a more wholesome understanding that the colonial period had its shares of violence and injustices just as much as it had victories and wealth. This makes decolonization an uncomfortable process as it forces society to review its perspective of the past. However, decolonization is more than bringing awareness. It is a process that deconstructs colonial systems of thought not just through physical societal change but also in societal mindset. Going by this definition of decolonization, we can say that through the interviews of the participants, we can see that the Netherlands or at least a part of the Dutch museum community

is embarking in the process of decolonization as it is making the effort of creating actions that reflect the mindset of social responsibility and correcting colonial injustices.

Following this thought as well, we can say that restitution without proper understanding of these objects' provenance is only a physical manifestation of decolonization and in a way is only at surface level. This is why the importance that is being put on provenance research from the Dutch side is an important point of reference from the interviews as it shows that the Netherlands is in the process of decolonizing not only its museums through actions but is also trying to exercise decolonization as a process in the reasons even behind these actions. Provenance research is important as it does not only give proof of the colonial injustices but more importantly shows the other side of the colonial narrative that has been buried and is now being given the space to be addressed and understood. For decolonization to happen, proper understanding of the colonial past must be accompanied by actions and policies that reflect this understanding. At present, the Netherlands is in the process of figuring out how to do these things in consideration of all the actors involved. Most of the discourse surrounding this debate primarily exists in museum circles and it may take a while before this debate will concretely touch the masses.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, ethical and legal concerns continue to surround colonial objects in Dutch possession. These ethical concerns revolve around the questions of ownership, righting of colonial injustice, and the proper handling of said objects. Increased colonial awareness not only in the Netherlands but also all around the world has brought these ethical concerns to the forefront of the debate as museums with colonial roots start to look into their own collections with a more critical eye.

In the case of the Netherlands, an increased sense of awareness of colonial injustices resulted in its acknowledgement of social responsibility. The ethical concerns surrounding colonial objects in Dutch possession, whether proven looted or not, triggered the need for concrete actions that are rooted in the idea of the Dutch's moral obligation to right colonial wrongs. In terms of concrete developments, the participants mentioned the act of provenance research and the Minister's request for the creation of a legal framework that addresses the proper handling of these colonial objects as important steps being taken by the Dutch side. Provenance research is an attempt to answer the ethical questions surrounding the objects while the request of the Minister is a start towards the creation of a framework or policy that will cater to the legal concerns being put forward. It must be noted that these two steps are interlinked with one another where provenance research will give clarity on what kind of legal frameworks or policy should be created in order to best give justice to the objects. At the same time these legal frameworks that are in the process of development, are being created as a response to the ethical concerns surrounding these objects in the first place. This then means that the ethical and legal concerns are linked to each other and must be in harmony in order to demonstrate concrete development and decolonization. Concrete actions, no matter what they may be, should come with the corresponding mindset of decolonization.

The process of decolonization is an ongoing project. This is in part of just how much colonization has permeated all areas of society and as was seen in the variation of answers of the participants, different actors in different fields will have varying opinions as to what decolonization looks like and what factors should be taken into consideration first. This also goes back to the criticisms of scholars towards decolonization which pinpoint that there are no specific guidelines as to how it should proceed. However, at the same time, this lack of suggestion

therefore means that decolonization is a process that can be done in multiple ways and is something that must be done in practice. In this regard, the Netherlands is taking the first step towards this process both in action and in mindset even though this process is inescapably slow.

However, it should be taken into consideration that this research only interviewed four participants that are in the cultural and museum field. Even though there were similarities in their answers, the perspectives that they have are very much different from one another's. These differences in perspectives and answers will only be more evident if a bigger sample of participants in different professions will be interviewed. This research does not claim that the answers of these four participants perfectly reflect the Dutch position. It does however give us an idea of what the current Dutch position is, how the future Dutch steps may look like as of now, how far the Netherlands has come in terms of generating development, and what this development looks like from the Dutch perspective, considering that the participants are professionals that are knowledgeable in this debate and are the actors directly concerned when it comes to cultural objects and restitution.

At the end of the day, the discussions, complexities, and differences in opinions surrounding colonial objects showcase their continued value to both the country that holds them and the country that they came from. As such, they should therefore be treated according to their value for the best of both parties.

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university of
 groningen

faculty of arts

research ethics committee

Agreement to participate - Research Ethics Committee (REC)
in research project:

Title: Where Do We Go From Here: A Qualitative Study of the Ethical and Legal Concerns Surrounding the Restitution of Looted Colonial Objects in the Netherlands

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the current debate concerning the way the Netherlands is dealing with the restitution of looted colonial objects in its possession from a legal and ethical perspective.

- I have read and I understand the information sheet of this present research project.
- I have had the opportunity to discuss this study. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the study until the moment that the study has been published, and to decline to answer any individual questions in the study.
- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential. Without my prior consent, no material, which could identify me will be used in any reports generated from this study.
- I understand that this data may also be used in articles, book chapters, published and unpublished work and presentations.
- I understand that all information I provide will be kept confidentially either in a locked facility or as a password protected encrypted file on a password protected computer.

Please circle YES or NO to each of the following:

I consent to my interview being audio-recorded YES / NO

I consent to have my name present in this research YES / NO

I wish to remain anonymous for this research YES / NO

If YES

My first name can be used for this research YES / NO

OR

A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research YES / NO

I consent to have my profession/position present in this research YES / NO

If NO

A title of my own choosing can be used in this research YES / NO

"I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet."

Signature of participant: _____

Date: 27-7-2021



Agreement to participate - Research Ethics Committee (REC)

in research project:

Title: Where Do We Go From Here: A Qualitative Study of the Ethical and Legal Concerns Surrounding the Restitution of Looted Colonial Objects in the Netherlands

The purpose of this study is to learn more about the current debate concerning the way the Netherlands is dealing with the restitution of looted colonial objects in its possession from a legal and ethical perspective.

- I have read and I understand the information sheet of this present research project.
- I have had the opportunity to discuss this study. I am satisfied with the answers I have been given.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the study until the moment that the study has been published, and to decline to answer any individual questions in the study.
- I understand that my participation in this study is confidential. Without my prior consent, no material, which could identify me will be used in any reports generated from this study.
- I understand that this data may also be used in articles, book chapters, published and unpublished work and presentations.
- I understand that all information I provide will be kept confidentially either in a locked facility or as a password protected encrypted file on a password protected computer.

Please circle YES or NO to each of the following:

I consent to my interview being audio-recorded YES / NO

I consent to have my name present in this research YES / NO

I wish to remain anonymous for this research YES / NO

IF YES

My first name can be used for this research YES / NO

OR

A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research YES / NO

I consent to have my profession/position present in this research YES / NO

IF NO

A title of my own choosing can be used in this research YES / NO

“I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet.”

Signature of participant: Arjen Dijkstra

Date: 10-5-2021

“I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research.”



Signature of researcher: _____ Ma. Viktoria Siva _____ Date: _____ 04/05/21 _____

Please fill in the following information. It will only be used in case you want to be sent a copy of interview notes so that you have the opportunity to make corrections.

Address:

Email:



Agreement to participate - Research Ethics Committee (REC)

in research project:

Title: Where Do We Go From Here: A Qualitative Study of the Ethical and Legal Concerns Surrounding the Restitution of Looted Colonial Objects in the Netherlands

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- I understand that all information I provide will be kept confidentially either in a locked facility or as a password protected encrypted file on a password protected computer.

Please circle YES or NO to each of the following:

I consent to my interview being audio-recorded **YES** / NO

I consent to have my name present in this research **YES** / NO

I wish to remain anonymous for this research YES / **NO**

IF YES

My first name can be used for this research YES / NO

OR

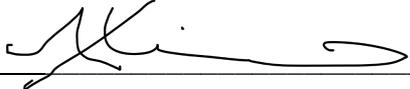
A pseudonym of my own choosing can be used in this research YES / NO

I consent to have my profession/position present in this research **YES** / NO

IF NO

A title of my own choosing can be used in this research YES / NO

“I agree to participate in this individual interview and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet.”

Signature of participant:  Date: 17-05-2021

“I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research.”



Signature of researcher: _____ Ma. Viktoria Siva _____ Date: _____ 04/05/21 _____

Please fill in the following information. It will only be used in case you want to be sent a copy of interview notes so that you have the opportunity to make corrections.

Address:

Email: arjen.ujterlinde@minbuza.nl

“I agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and I ensure no harm will be done to any participant during this research.”



Signature of researcher: _____ Ma. Viktoria Siva _____ Date: _____ 04/05/21 _____

Please fill in the following information. It will only be used in case you want to be sent a copy of interview notes so that you have the opportunity to make corrections.

Address: Museum Volkenkunde, Steenstraat 1, 2312 BS, Leiden
Email: rosalie.hans@wereldculturen.nl