

# Stefanie Wuschitz

## Decolonial Computing

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** So how would you describe or define *decolonial computing*?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** It is the abolishment of hardware as it is today. Instead, decolonial computing acknowledges the trauma of centuries of violence through mining for, manufacturing, and applying hardware. We need to take time to grieve over the damage it has caused to bodies, communities, social movements, young democracies, the environment, and our ability to think equality worldwide. Decolonial computing next grows an ocean of ears to listen to multitudes of stories, memories, ideas that testify to people's ongoing desire to resolve conflicts, to change dilemmas, to unlearn hierarchy, to find shared values. If we do find shared values, we try to agree on materials, practices, and applications that are available, shareable, necessary.

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** How is *decolonial computing* different from, let's say, supercomputing or feminist computing?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** Feminist computing is about caring enough so that people who are socialized as female or non-binary enjoy formulating their ideas and articulating themselves through creative interventions in public. Decolonial computing is a diffractive approach—thinking anti-imperialist struggles with playful artistic potentials of worlding.

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** Are you working on something you would label as decolonial computing?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** Yes, I have been researching Indonesia's history of social movements in the 1950s and 1960s that were destroyed in order to "open Indonesia up" to foreign investors. It is obvious that mining still takes its toll on this country (see "Coded Feminisms"). Now I am working with Patricia J. Reis and Taguhi Torosyan on a project called "Feminist Hardware," in which we try to build our own electronic components from materials we find less problematic.

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** That sounds exciting. What kind of materials are these?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** Ceramics; microbes; organic material; matter that conducts, resists, or generates electricity; and also up-cycled and urban-mined parts. We will explore them as a source for future technologies if they are available in most places in the world and can

be assembled with DIY prototyping tools as well as disassembled without harm to people or the environment.

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** Do you also imagine what kind of structures (logistics/knowledge/education) are needed to manufacture them?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** In an arts-based research project called Feminist Hacking, affiliated with the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, we are currently exploring various structures for assembling this ethical and feminist hardware necessary for decolonial computing. One option is to use rapid prototyping tools as promoted and made accessible by the maker movement. Another option is to collaborate with existing companies that are committed to standards required for labeling something as "ethical" hardware. And manufacturers producing in a "fair trade" mode, ideally releasing it as "open source hardware" (OSH). Another option is to build networks and generate kinship to collect sufficient alternative materials. For example, material that can be salvaged or collected in your own home, reborn from your garbage bin, grown in your garden as well as found in your urban environment. And re-activate existing local crafting skills and crafting/making sites to process them. For each option, we develop different strategies of knowledge transfer. To answer your question completely, I have to ask you to be patient until 2023, when our arts-based research project Feminist Hacking will end and we will publish our findings.

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** Wonderful. Let me come back to an idea you mentioned earlier. You said that decolonial computing would grow an ocean of ears to listen. That sounds very poetic. What do you mean more concretely by saying that?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** What decolonial computing mostly does is to acknowledge the need and opportunity for system change. Ears will facilitate decolonization, so that a form of reconciliation and healing can emerge. (Now we need to listen closely to the witnesses. And where there is no witness and nobody protesting or remembering the protest any longer, we need to reconstruct what has been lost.) What has colonialism left undone, destroyed, hidden, coded, or encrypted only because the content was disobedient to a patriarchal capitalist state of the art? Where are the gaps, the blank pages, the missing practices? How did their blockage inhibit (and censor) our own problem-solving skills, our sparkling creativity and vibrant vitality? We can do so much better than this.

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** Where do you situate "countering" in decolonial computing? How would you situate decolonial computing within countering and how would you imagine its role?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** During the cold war there were some countries that

had just declared independence from their colonial oppressors and therefore joined the non-alignment movement. They wanted peaceful co-existence instead of either being aligned with the “West” or aligned with the Soviet Union. I imagine decolonial computing similarly as an international effort to allow peaceful co-existence to all people connected through international commodity chains and global e-waste. How can we think commodity chains as chains of support instead of chain reactions of disaster?

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** Yes, how? What kind of rules or protocols do we need for that?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** We will build electronics that need lower amounts of voltage and can be woven into ecological landscapes without disrupting them. They instead make inherent circles tangible and respect the assemblage of agents who maintain circular economies as commons. We see assemblages of agents not only among humans but also figuration of more-than-human communities. Let’s take into consideration that we are part of this world.

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** What you describe is more so a type of frameworks. I totally agree that we are part of this world and we should be careful, but what kind of rules do you imagine? How would you make sure that decolonial computing will work to some degree? What kind of operations become important? You mention, for example, making tangible or commoning. So how would decolonial computing work concretely? What are your plans? I guess it starts with listening to communities, but then what are the next steps?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** Resistors, variable resistors, transistors, capacitors, diodes, oscillators, chips. We need to reinvent them from scratch, with new sustainable materials that might conduct electricity a bit slower and are perhaps larger, but manufactured, installed, and powered in a decentralized, entangled way. We demand that mining companies pay taxes to regions that are mined and pay fair wages to workers. Electric components will come in a modular form, so they can easily be fixed, replaced, or upgraded. When X-rays were discovered they were also first used for entertainment, until we discovered how harmful they are. Today X-rays are only used by trained hospital staff for medical purposes. Consistent with recent discoveries on the harmfulness of our technology industry, we need to restrict the use of hardware as it is produced today and instead enable decolonial computing.

**Shintaro Miyazaki:** Could you please suggest further counter-Ns or N-computing(s) or N-futuring(s)?

**Stefanie Wuschitz:** Wild computing, counter-dreaming, apology-futuring

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