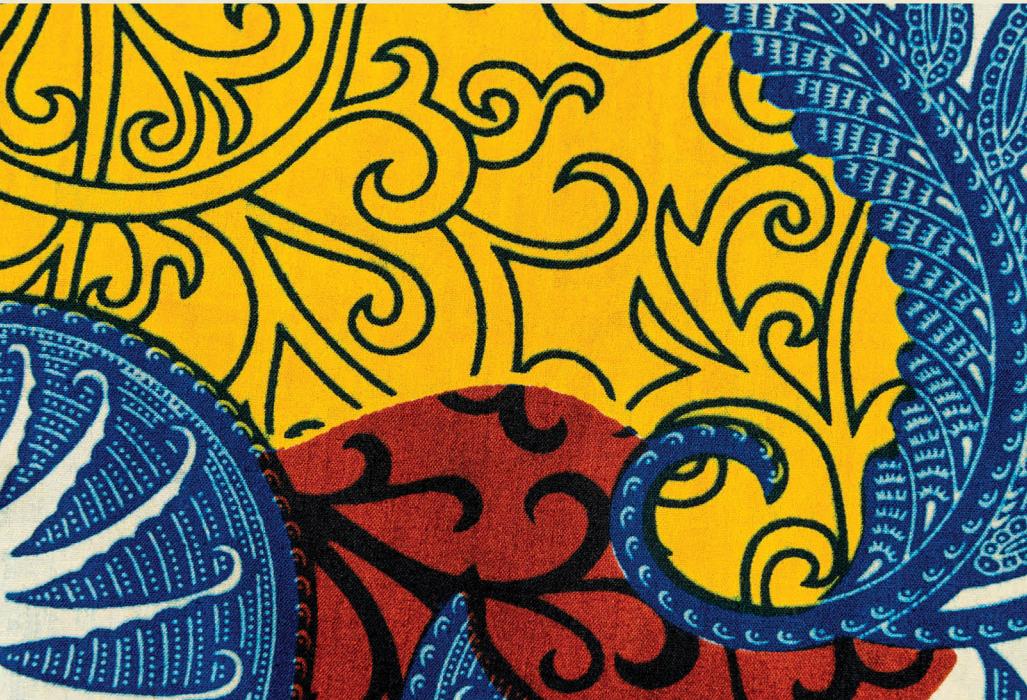


Beyond the Master's Tools?

Decolonizing Knowledge
Orders, Research Methods
and Teaching

Edited by Daniel Bendix,
Franziska Müller and Aram Ziai



Beyond the Master's Tools?

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Contents

Acknowledgements	ix
1 Decolonizing Knowledge Orders, Research Methodology and the Academia: An Introduction	1
<i>Aram Ziai, Daniel Bendix and Franziska Müller</i>	
PART I: DECOLONIZING GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ORDERS	17
2 Undoing the Epistemic Disavowal of the Haitian Revolution: A Contribution to Global Social Thought	19
<i>Gurminder K. Bhambra</i>	
3 Decolonizing Feminism: Reflections from the Latin American Context	37
<i>Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo</i>	
4 Intermezzo I – Knowledge Orders	63
<i>Gurminder K. Bhambra, Julia Suárez-Krabbe, Robbie Shilliam, Manuela Boatcă, Olivia U. Rutazibwa, Peo Hansen and Mariam Popal</i>	
PART II: DECOLONIZING RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	69
5 Postcolonial Feminist Ethics and the Politics of Research Collaborations across North-South Divides	71
<i>Johanna Leinius</i>	

6	Community Accountable Scholarship within a Critical Participatory Action Research Model <i>Melanie Brazzell</i>	93
7	‘Tell Us Something about Yourself, Too’ – Reflections on Collaborative Research as a Tool for a Reflexive Methodology <i>Miriam friz Trzeciak</i>	117
8	Intermezzo II – Methodology <i>Mariam Popal, Gurminder K. Bhambra, Manuela Boatcă, Julia Suárez-Krabbe, Olivia U. Rutazibwa, Robbie Shilliam and Maria Eriksson Baaz</i>	135
PART III: DECOLONIZING ACADEMIA		141
9	‘They Call It “White Guilt: The Module”’: Reflections on Teaching Postcolonial and Decolonial Geographies <i>Andrew Davies and Kathy Burrell</i>	143
10	Race, Class and Gender at German Universities: A Round- Table Discussion <i>Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Kien Nghi Ha, Jan Hutta, Emily Ngubia Kessé, Mike Laufenberg and Lars Schmitt</i>	163
11	Decolonizing Development Studies: Pedagogic Reflections <i>Andrea Cornwall</i>	191
12	Teaching Post Development as a Tool for Transformation <i>Wendy Harcourt</i>	205
13	Tools Against the Masters: Decolonial Unsettling of the Social Science Classroom <i>Chandra-Milena Danielzik, Franziska Müller and Daniel Bendix</i>	225
14	Decolonizing Development Studies: Teaching in Zhengistan <i>Aram Ziai</i>	243
15	Intermezzo III – Academia <i>Robbie Shilliam, Gurminder K. Bhambra, Peo Hansen, Julia Suárez-Krabbe, Olivia U. Rutazibwa and Mariam Popal</i>	257
Index		263
About the Editors and Contributors		269

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Chapter 1

Decolonizing Knowledge Orders, Research Methodology and the Academia: An Introduction

Aram Ziai, Daniel Bendix and Franziska Müller

Western academia is facing contestation. While for a long time academic privileges such as ‘the right to research’ (Appadurai 2006) have remained unquestioned, the past decade has seen a new wave of de- and anticolonial critique that is about to change academia from within. Campaigns against predominantly white and Western-dominated curricula, often inspired by #RhodesMustFall in South Africa, have created a sense of transnational solidarity among academics and have resulted in an enhanced awareness of the colonial heritage of academic institutions (Chantiluke et al. 2018; Jansen 2019; Nyamnjoh 2016). They have underlined the need to systemically change academia’s foundations including curricula, employment regimes, teaching standards as well as methodological considerations (de Jong et al. 2018; Loyola-Hernández 2019; Narayanaswamy 2019). Such attempts to decolonize academia should not be understood as merely an addition to liberal diversity management practices but rather as a fundamental rupture with the still prevalent colonial underpinnings of scientific enquiry and research practice. The current wave of practical decolonial criticism aims at ‘provincializing’ allegedly universal standards of scientific knowledge production, research frameworks and methodology as Western products that are rooted in a very specific historical tradition (Chakrabarty 2000).

In the field of international relations (IR), the post- and decolonial wave is apparent in a number of works, for instance, John Hobson’s accounts of IR myths or Robert Vitalis’ analysis of IR as an U.S.-American tradition. The creation of counter-narratives centred around the Bandung conference (Pham and Shilliam 2016), Third World resource cartels (Prashad 2012) or Asian political philosophy (Ling 2013) pluralizes the history and research paradigms of the discipline. Concomitantly, postcolonial critique of epistemology and enquiry has gained momentum in other fields of social sciences

and humanities, for instance with the rise of subdisciplines such as ‘global history’ or ‘global heritage studies’ that recognize the entanglement of historical experiences, question practices of cultural preservation and museological depiction, and speak out in favour of a restitution of looted art and human remains from colonial archives (Cooper and Stoler 1997; Sarr and Savoy 2018). In a similar fashion, sociology cherishes ‘critical border studies’ as a way of going beyond biopolitical migration research in problematizing the figure of ‘the border’ (Anzaldúa 1987). These forms of engagement with social sciences’ history and knowledge production demonstrate to what extent academic practices are pervaded by colonial notions. They allow for a deep-felt reflection about our disciplines and the development of alternative epistemologies and methodologies departing from a Western matrix that has dominated academia for so long.

A number of recent developments illustrate contestation over academic knowledge production on colonialism and imperialism. Indeed, while postcolonial and decolonial critique increasingly find academic and political recognition, also strong resentment and denouncing can be found (Bendix 2018). A recent case is the ‘Bruce Gilley controversy’, that is, the publication of an historically erroneous piece on the allegedly beneficial aspects of the racist colonial order in the journal *Third World Quarterly*,¹ eventually resulting in a resignation of fifteen board members and a retraction of the article in 2017. The debate has seen many academics taking a stance in criticizing the journal’s publication ethos, and dismantling the author’s claim to write on behalf of defending ‘free speech’ and ‘academic freedom’ as an instrumentalization of colonial mass atrocities that defends free speech only for the hegemonic few who currently see their cultural hegemony crumpling apart. That Gilley was invited by the AfD, Germany’s right-wing party, to speak at the German parliament on ‘Why the Germans don’t have to apologize for the colonial period and certainly don’t have to pay for it’ demonstrates to what extent acknowledgement of colonial legacies seems to create a sense of unrest for those who still understand colonial expansions as a normal outcome of foreign policy.²

Still, the resignation of the board members signifies that academics are aware of the dangers of being complicit with colonial thinking. However, a lack of awareness for colonial constellations becomes manifest in even more subtle forms of academic knowledge production. Yet, also unintentional practices need to be taken into account, as they may also contribute to epistemic racism in academia, that is, non-representation, silencing, racial stereotypes or dichotomies.

1 See <https://africasacountry.com/2017/09/the-third-world-quarterly-debacle> (accessed 2 April 2020).

2 <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/afd-und-deutsche-kolonialzeit-danke-fuer-die-unterdrueckung-16508136.html> (accessed 11 December 2019).

CONTESTING THE MASTER'S TOOLS

It is in this context that we see the need for a thorough discussion of methodology in the social sciences with outlining strategies for a different methodology, inspired by post- and decolonial critique. We are starting from Audre Lorde's (1984) seminal quotation that 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house', interpreting her words as not only a fundamental critique of academic enquiry and its colonial underpinnings but also a call for finding avenues for overcoming them. Post- and decolonial perspectives point to colonial continuities embedded not just in the epistemic foundations and thematic concerns but also in the actual practices, that is, the craft of research as canonized in research methods and methodologies. A decolonizing approach to social science research is necessarily twofold: the deconstruction of existing methodologies and methods that (re)produce the coloniality of knowledge and a reconstruction and/or reinvention of research practice. However, this does not mean that we subscribe to Lorde's claim at all times and without reservations: not all social science methodology needs to be discarded, and some of it can be used for liberating purposes as well. It is necessary to be aware of two things: For one, as Chakrabarty (2000) points out, concepts purely based on Western experiences (such as those of Marxism) have often proven to be useful for non-Western scholars and critics as well. We do not live in worlds entirely separated by cultural difference. Second, that on a closer inspection the concepts and structures usually designated as Western are those that have attained hegemony in the West at one point in history. Yet they have not been uncontested, as, for example, Santos (2014) has shown, pointing to counter-hegemonic scholars and traditions within Europe. From a feminist and Marxist perspective, Federici (2004) also demonstrates that science and capitalism as we know them became hegemonic in modern Western Europe only through violent transitions.

Post- and decolonial approaches claim to offer epistemological lenses that allow for a more pluralist, contextualized and enriched understanding of the social world and seek to transform academia and its norms. While the disciplines of literary and cultural studies, anthropology and history have by now to some extent engaged with post- and decolonial approaches, the social sciences lag somewhat behind. So far, the post- and decolonial impact on the latter has mainly been restricted to borrowing, appropriation and adaption of existing methods and concepts. While such developments may evidence a desirable 'mainstreaming' of heterodox and critical approaches, we can still observe that globally the 'right to research' (Appadurai 2006) as a universalized hegemony over knowledge production remains to some extent the reserve of a minority marked by privileges linked to the history of colonialism – the privilege to conceal one's own identity as 'neutral', the privilege to be considered an

expert and the privilege to engage in knowledge production on whatever context, unbeknownst of one's individual entanglement with said context. This obstructs comprehension and analysis of social reality from a plurality of perspectives, and promotes a false objectivity and universality. 'Researching back' (Smith 2012) appears to be a necessary but difficult process, all the more in the context of neoliberal academic competition and research funding.

In political science, post- and decolonial approaches open up the field for a radical reorganization of research paradigms that allows for overcoming Eurocentric/Occidental notions which still pervade the discipline's epistemologies and research designs (Grovogui 1996, 2006). Analytical categories such as institutional configurations, modes of governance, forms of political participation and geographies of power are distinctly driven by an inherent logic of 'norm and deviance', thereby resulting in the creation of dichotomies that ultimately serve as a hindrance to a more pluralist way of actually doing political science research. Post- and decolonial research methodologies have zoomed in on the transfer and contestation of normative orders (Acharya 2004; Acharya and Buzan 2010; Rutazibwa and Shilliam 2018; Tickner and Blaney 2013; Ziai 2016), the historical foundations of political science concepts (Hansen and Jonsson 2014; Ling 2013; Vitalis 2015) and attitudes and identity ascriptions among development experts (Eriksson Baaz 2005; Heron 2007). In the realm of political theory, post- and decolonial approaches have the potential to contribute to a critical reappraisal of indigenous concepts, transcultural comparative research and a reinvestigation of existing norms which is sensitive to the ideas and expectations of agents from the global South. While the discipline of IR has recently started to integrate post-/decolonial approaches (Chowdhry and Nair 2004; Gruffydd Jones 2006; Shilliam 2010), the post-/decolonial challenge has not yet fully reached the realm of methodological design and empirical research. In this regard, we see a huge potential for reflections on research designs, the roles of researchers and interaction with 'the field' and the way of doing empirical fieldwork. These aspects all contribute to the overarching aim of redesigning research tools, such as interview methodology or participant observation.

In sociology, a critical reappraisal of the foundational notion of modernity and its Eurocentric implications has enabled a series of reorientations that culminate in a more nuanced understanding of the interconnectedness of 'the West' and 'the Rest' (Hall 1992) as well as the accompanying dichotomy of 'the Self'/'the Other'. This in turn has not only led to questioning the social structures and mechanisms of the 'own society' but has also given way for reflecting on the globalization of societies from a post- and decolonial perspective (Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. 2010). Especially for the field of (trans) migration and post-migration studies, the 'methodological nationalism' (Glick-Schiller and Wimmer 2003) of the social sciences has been questioned.

Speaking about migrants as ‘agents of change’ means to not only reassess notions of exploitation but also highlight empowering processes of subjectivation which occur along migration processes. Postcolonial feminisms have also been fruitful for exploring the field of global care economies and global care chains (Hochschild 2000). Following post-structuralist, deconstructivist and post-/decolonial critique, foundational sociological concepts such as actor, subject, practices and identity have been put into question. The main concern continues to be the post- and decolonial reconsideration of sociological methods such as empirically interpretive research (Asad 1993). Fruitful suggestions already produced within sociology can be critical tools in this regard: the reflection of one’s own position as a researcher with a particular field of enquiry, the deconstruction of narrative and rhetorical strategies as well as modes of listening and understanding with regard to historical and geopolitical frameworks, the reflection on the norms and normativities of sociological biography research (e.g., Dausien and Mecheril 2006), the positioning of ethnography as a multisited practice (Gupta and Ferguson 1997) and, not least, notions of hybridity (Bhabha 1994), border crossing (Anzaldúa 1987) and ‘mestizaje as method’ (Sandoval 1997). Across all involved disciplines, the implications of post- and decolonial methodological perspectives allow researchers to practice a more reflexive and situated knowledge production. The perspectives enable not only a constructive critique but also a reconstruction of methodologies and methods in ways that open up new lenses, new archives of knowledges and reconsider the who, the how and the what of the craft of social science research.

Post- and decolonial studies have not only shown to what extent academic knowledge production bears conceptual traces of colonial history (Apffel-Marglin and Marglin 1990, 1996; Bhabra 2014; Mignolo 2007) but have also started to explore research practices that question Eurocentric biases (Kaltmeier and Corona Berkin 2012; Smith 1999). The methodological reflection of ongoing entanglements of research in hegemonic power/knowledge complexes results in the rise of decolonial methods and research practice (Brown and Sega 2015; Chilisa 2011; Grosfoguel 2007; Smith 1999). Feminist, anti-racist and decolonial scholars have focused on developing methods for power sensitive research (Giebelter and Meneses 2012; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 1999; Hernández Castillo 2001; Mohanty 1988; Sandoval 2000); put forward concepts such as positional reflexivity, standpoint feminism, situated knowledge or critical whiteness; and thus deconstruct positivist notions of knowledge production. Analysing everyday practices through ethnomethodological methods, reflecting on ‘writing culture’ (Clifford and Marcus 1986) in cultural anthropology, focusing on counter-narratives in biographical research (Lutz 2009; Spies 2010), conceptualizing gaps and silences in discourse analysis (Angermüller 2005; Kosnick 2010; Ziai

2016) or addressing complexity in situational analysis (Clarke 2005) are all approaches that provide useful tools for decolonial research. Furthermore, participatory research methods such as popular education (Freire 1973) or participatory action research (Fals Borda 1987) initiate horizontal and collaborative research processes beyond the separation of researching subject and researched object (Denzin et al. 2008).

We see the problem of coloniality on different but interrelated levels of knowledge production: On the level of knowledge orders, we see it in epistemology (Whose experience and knowledge counts as valid, scientific knowledge? How is a theory of universally valid knowledge linked to the depreciation and destruction of other knowledge?) as well as in ontology (Which elements constitute our world and form the basis of our research and which are seen as irrelevant? Has this been influenced by the legitimization of domination? Do we perceive our units of analysis as individual and discrete or as always historically interwoven and entangled?). On the level of research methodology, we see it in the relations of power existing between subjects and objects of research (Who is seen as capable of producing knowledge? Who determines the purpose of research? Who provides the data for the research and who engages in theory building and career making on this basis?). On the level of the academia, we see it in the curricula (Which type of knowledge and which authors are being taught in the universities?) as well as in the recruitment of scholars (Which mechanisms of exclusion persist in the education system determining who will become a producer of knowledge in institutions of higher education?).

On all three levels, we would like to discuss the need or possibility to go beyond the tools of knowledge production of colonial modernity. Partly, we see them clearly intertwined with the objective of domination: Bacon's idea that nature has to be analysed in order to be subdued by man, Descartes' idea that knowledge is produced by a rational individual dissecting reality into its constituents (including the 'vivisectional mandate'; see Visvanathan 1988), Hobbes' idea that humans are power-hungry beasts going to war with one another unless restrained by an institution with the monopoly of violence and Smith's and Locke's ideas about man's natural inclination to barter and desire more goods and property. However, as critical as we might be about Western modernity, we also have to face the fact that it seems very attractive to the majority worldwide who demands to be part of it. What is more, Western modernity has never been solely an elite and internal process but has been shaped by counter-hegemonic (e.g., worker's movements achieving social improvements) and non-European influences (e.g., Muslim scholars in Spain promoting the spherical form of the earth).

Similarly, we can denounce the universalist epistemology of positivism as a typical master's tool, neglecting the situatedness of knowledge and

simulating a view from nowhere through its ‘God-trick’ (Haraway) by claiming objectivity. Yet even if we subscribe to feminist or decolonial standpoint theory and a plurality of knowledges, even if we adhere to an ethics of democratic and collaborative knowledge production instead of research questions and methods being dictated by institutional requirements of academia (Harding 2015), can we do entirely without standards of objectivity and criteria for comparing different descriptions of reality? How are we to identify colonial narratives as myths if not by reference to some intersubjective reality? And in what way is this different from positivist epistemology and methodology? It seems we have to be very precise in identifying what exactly the master’s tools are, which tools might be indispensable for liberating purposes and which definitely need to be overcome.

And of course the Charter of Decolonial Research Ethics (Decoloniality Europe 2013) is right in pointing out the privileges of research and demanding their abandonment in favour of a more democratic form of knowledge production. But if the charter demands ‘nothing that concerns the researcher’s work with the decolonial movements can be submitted to publishing (including congress or seminar presentations, blog entries, op-eds, etc) without previous explicit permission for each intended publication given by the research subjects’, one wonders not only about who decides on the definition of decolonial movements but even more so on the question who speaks for them, in particular if there is no consensus within the movement. Although we share the aim of unlearning our privileges, we are concerned that this demand might in practice allow leaders of a movement to prevent publications which shed light on relations of power within the movement. And that it might not do justice to what Spivak calls the ‘critic’s institutional responsibility’ (1988: 75) in her rejection of simply letting subaltern subjects speak for themselves (80).

DECOLONIZING KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: THE BOOK AHEAD

Against this backdrop, this book explores the profound challenges and innovations that post- and decolonial approaches offer for knowledge production in the social sciences. Doing so, it provides a space for more in-depth repercussions for the craft and practice of research and teaching, that is, in terms of research and teaching designs for the social sciences or methodological development in ways that more adequately examine our global order.

Three dimensions of decolonial research and academic practice stand at the centre of the volume: We first present social science research that refers to the colonial or Eurocentric design of global knowledge orders, by focusing on the intellectual history and structures of social science. This is followed

by concrete strategies for decolonizing social science methodology, that is, reconstructing and reinventing research practices which reduce, sidestep or even transcend coloniality, that is, decolonize academic enquiry. We present examples of fieldwork experiences, for example, when practicing forms of participative action research. Third, we share ideas for decolonizing the academic sphere, for instance, regarding classroom situations, teaching tools or didactical concepts. We believe that concrete strategies for inventing different didactics of social science are deeply missing and therefore see a need for practical skill-sharing.

The first part of the book, *Decolonizing knowledge orders*, deals with the question how the prevalent geopolitics of knowledge production shape social science research – how some topics and connections are marginalized, but also with how these marginalizations can be overcome.

Gurminder Bhambra explores this question by examining knowledge production in the disciplines of sociology and history. She argues that the failure to systematically incorporate colonialism into accounts of modernity is not one of individual scholarship but is related to disciplinary divisions that separate the modern (sociology) from the traditional and colonial (anthropology). These conveniently allow sociologists to simply ignore the constitutive role of colonialism in the making of Western modernity. Switching to another discipline, she also finds manifestations of this colonial knowledge order in accounts of global history which are diminishing and silencing the Haitian revolution while praising the American and French revolutions as hallmarks of modernity's struggle for freedom and equality despite their markedly more restricted political claims and their continued denial of equal rights for non-whites. Bhambra thus pleads for an alternative approach of 'connected sociologies'.

Aída Hernández continues the investigation of how knowledge orders manage to silence the voice of the other by examining feminist research and the question of epistemological colonialism. In her contribution she tells not only of the First Indigenous Women's Summit in 2003, whose statements about women's aspirations based on spirituality and duality have been discounted by liberal feminism, but also of the literary workshops in the Atlacholoaya Women's Social Correction Centre enabling intercultural dialogue and leading to the publication of the life stories and poetry of indigenous women prisoners. She also documents the difficult legal and social struggle against sexual violence (committed by soldiers) of two members of the Me'phaa Indigenous People's Organization, who understood their experience as part of a collective history of colonialism and racism and demanded reparations for the community and demilitarization of the region. In their cosmology, the individual and the collective cannot be separated, nor can human beings and nature. Hernández does not claim knowledge based on this cosmology to

be superior but suggests an ecology of feminist knowledge based on a more equitable relation between Western and other forms of knowledge.

The second part of the book comprises examples of attempts to *decolonize research methodologies*. It asks what this implies in terms of research agendas, research cooperation, case studies, academic discourse and dissemination. How can research designs and field access be realized without reproducing power complexes, but enable a process of ‘studying with’ (Mato) marginalized actors and social groups? And how does this clash with academic regulations?

Weaving together threads from activist, feminist and post-/decolonial research, Johanna Leinius presents a framework for committed research which tries to establish non-dominant, collaborative relationships between academics and activists under the adverse conditions of coloniality. The framework, developed together with a Peruvian NGO (PDTG), is based on building a common project of embedded knowledge production blurring the boundaries between researchers and activists, a proximity of the researcher to the researched communities which is both partial and reflective, and on not only giving back research results but handing over the ‘privilege of the last word’ to the collaborating movements or communities and rendering the researcher accountable.

The contribution by Melanie Brazzell is based on her work in the transformative justice movement and theorizes the concept of community accountable scholarship developed therein. Starting from the experience of women of colour who experienced that resorting to the state authorities and their legal system often does more harm than good, her research explores community-based, self-organized responses to sexual violence and the shift they entail from the dominant carceral logic towards an ethic of social connection. It becomes clear that this shift also entails a different ontology, a different concept of the subject not as an autonomous individual but as one constituted through relationships of communication, recognition and power. Thus, any response to violence has to take these relationships into account, superseding a model of individual guilt and punishment. Regarding research, the model of accountability proposed here also means citing knowledge producers beyond the academy as well and making space for researched peoples to speak for themselves, treating activists as theorists and challenge the separation. Being accountable further entails being as accessible and transparent as possible throughout the research process, including the dissemination of results. It does not mean, Brazzell maintains, giving up the ‘privilege of the last word’.

Miriam friz Trzeciak similarly reflects on their dialogical research carried out with communities in South Mexico and the restraints of academic knowledge production. Building on methodological tools by Fals Borda (participative action research, sentipensar) and Freire (popular education) and

highlighting the importance of reflecting different but shifting positionalities, their effort to ‘study with’ the communities was also shaped by their interview partners. Not content with the asymmetrical relation between research subject and objects, they were eager to acquire information about their own background as well, rendering the relation more egalitarian and enabling the establishment of trust and accountability needed for collaborative research. The presentation and discussion of the research results in a workshop for those who had participated in generating the knowledge was thus perceived by Trzeciak as the ‘first defence’ of their doctoral thesis.

In the third part, the contributions deal with *decolonizing the academia*: most of all with the teaching in universities, but also with the institutions of knowledge production themselves. In what ways do they reproduce coloniality and how can this be overcome?

Andrew Davies and Kathy Burrell reflect on teaching postcolonial geography and on how past colonial structures persist into the present, on the way the teaching is shaped by the positionalities of the teachers and the students and the environment of the university and on ‘unlearning privilege’ as white middle-class lecturers. This entails discussing with the students the lecturers’ relation to colonialism, the intersection of race and class in Brexit discussions, the colonial legacies in the city of Liverpool (in particular related to the transatlantic trade in enslaved people), but also the question of representing colonial violence through showing images which might reiterate the violence.

Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Kien Nghi Ha, Jan Hutta, Emily Ngubia Kessé, Mike Laufenberg and Lars Schmitt explore race, class and gender in German universities in their documented debate. They highlight racial exclusions and white power structures within tertiary education. Furthermore, they discuss how it can be prevented that progressive impulses lead to neoliberal universities which exhibit diversity and multiculturalism, gender-sensitivity and equal opportunities while still reproducing mechanisms of discrimination and exclusion. Some contributions in this interview also question the value of meritocracy which is based on the assumption of objective criteria for measuring the quality of academic work (and grading it) and discuss not only the feelings of insecurity, fear and shame linked to some positionalities and practices in academia but also the common struggles and strategies against discrimination and oppression.

In an intriguing narrative piece, Andrea Cornwall tells us about how she came to be alienated from the development industry and about her methods of teaching a course in international development at the University of Sussex with the stated aim of deterring students from a career in this field. Providing a host of ideas for creative and empowering teaching, she also shares how she gradually transformed the course into one more concerned with possibilities for local change according to ideals of social, gender, racial and ecological justice.

In a similar manner, Wendy Harcourt reflects on her experiences in teaching development studies from a post-development perspective in the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague – where most of the students are from the global South. We learn about institutional challenges, the positive and negative reactions from the students and relations of power in the classroom in her attempt to decolonize teaching – which lead the author to ask whether revolutionary ideas can be produced in reactionary institutions.

Chandra-Milena Danielzik, Daniel Bendix and Franziska Müller highlight experiences with various methods that bring postcolonial knowledge and decolonial practice to the classroom. They hold that a post- or decolonial approach needs to make use of a variety of approaches and methods to engage students' participation and involvement. The methods they present not only recognize different avenues of acquiring knowledge but also take into account that students come from diverse backgrounds in terms of race, class and gender, and value their cognitive, emotional and physical connections to colonial legacies and postcolonial futures.

Finally, Aram Ziai also writes about some practical experiences with the necessity to decolonize development studies, the theoretical insights of the post-development critique and his attempts to do so in teaching the subject.

Since we believe that decolonial strategies must move beyond established format and need to actively create different tools for intervention, we have included a number of short interviews³ with scholars and scholar activists – the intermezzi – that give an account of their reflections on decolonizing global knowledge orders, of their experiences with doing research differently and of their practical work in building new and more inclusive academic structures. We have assembled their answers in light of the structure of this book, i.e. with a focus on knowledge orders, methodology and teaching.

We understand this volume as an opportunity to assess the methodological implications of post- and decolonial approaches for the study of global order and create the conditions to facilitate both necessary interdisciplinary dialogue and field-specific debate about experiences with empirical methods informed by post- and decolonial perspectives. Above all, we see it as a contribution to a broader debate about decolonization that takes place, for example, on the site www.convivialthinking.org. It invites scholars to reinvent old and craft new tools with which to conduct their enquiry: post- and decolonial tools that go beyond the Eurocentric limitations of the colonial past. Not only with the intent to achieve a clearer view on colonial modernity but also as a step towards its political transformation.

3 These interviews were carried out at the international conference 'Beyond the master's tools' that took place at the University of Kassel and was organized by the editors plus a number of colleagues (Kwesi Aikins, Josephine Brämer, Franziska Dübgen, Eric Otieno Sumba, Miriam friz Trzeciak, Elisabeth Tuider).

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Part I

DECOLONIZING GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ORDERS

Chapter 2

Undoing the Epistemic Disavowal of the Haitian Revolution: A Contribution to Global Social Thought

Gurminder K. Bhambra

I

In recent years, sociology – along with many other disciplines – has gone through a ‘global turn’.^{1,2} This focus on ‘the global’ has often been promoted as a way in which sociology can redress its previous neglect of those represented as Other in its construction of modernity. The most common form of engagement is to call for additional accounts of events, processes and thinkers that can be used to supplement the already existing narratives, both historical and canonical. On such understandings, the global and global sociology are presented as descriptors of the present and a call for sociology to be different in the future. In contrast, I ask how sociological thought could be differently conceptualized if we took seriously global historical interconnections. I focus, in particular, on the instance of the Haitian revolution and what can be learnt, both from its omission from accounts of events claimed to be of ‘world-historical’ significance and from how theory would need to be rethought once we took other such events seriously. In particular, I want to examine what is at stake in such rethinking – what Santos (2014) has called

1 Reprinted from Gurminder K. Bhambra. 2016. ‘Undoing the Epistemic Disavowal of the Haitian Revolution: A Contribution to Global Social Thought’. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37 (1): 1–16.

2 I would like to thank Boaventura de Sousa Santos and John Holmwood for their constructive critical engagement with this chapter across its various stages. I also thank Boa for the initial invitation to present an early version of this chapter at the International Colloquium on Epistemologies of the South held in Coimbra in 2014. This chapter was developed in the context of the research project ALICE, strange mirrors, unsuspected lessons, coordinated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (alice. ces. uc.pt) at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra – Portugal. It was also shaped by conversations with colleagues participating in the Egalitarianisms seminar led by Danielle Allen at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, and at the KOSMOS workshop on ‘Beyond Methodological Eurocentrism’ organized by Ina Kerner in Berlin. I appreciate the feedback received from colleagues and hope that the chapter does justice to the comments and suggestions made. All errors are mine.

for in terms of an address of cognitive injustices – and how we might consider alternative formulations through an approach I call ‘connected sociologies’ (Bhabra 2014).

There is little consensus on the meaning of ‘global’, either in its own terms or in the context of it as a qualifier of the way in which sociology as a discipline operates (or might come to operate). Beck’s (2000) argument for a cosmopolitan social science, for example, challenges what he presents as its standard methodological nationalism. Instead, he argues for the need to take ‘world society’ as the starting point of sociological and other research. His ‘world society’, however, is one in which the historically inherited inequalities arising from the legacies of European colonialism and slavery play no part. Beck (2002) argues that he is not interested in the memory of the global past, but simply in how a vision of a cosmopolitan future could have an impact on the politics of the present. This, as I have argued at greater length elsewhere, is disingenuous at best (Bhabra 2014). Any theory that seeks to address the question of ‘how we live in the world’ cannot treat as irrelevant the historical construction of that world (for discussion, see Trouillot 1995). In this chapter, I take issue with the claims of global sociology more generally and examine the implications, precisely, of taking seriously the historical construction of the world in our theoretical conceptualizations.

II

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there have been increasing calls for ‘global sociology’. From early arguments by Akiwowo (1988, 1999), among others, for the ‘indigenization’ of social science, to later calls by Alatas (2001, 2006a) and Sinha (2003) for an ‘autonomous’ social science (see also, Alatas 2002, 2006b). These have been complemented by arguments for Southern theory by Connell (2007, 2010), for diverse sociologies by Patel (2010a, 2010b) and global sociology from below by Burawoy (2010a, 2010b). These arguments go beyond recognizing the significance of ‘the global’ as a topic or theme within sociology and argue instead for sociology to recognize its multiple and globally diverse origins – that is, to consider what a properly conceptualized global sociology might look like and how it might better serve the global futures towards which we are seen to be headed (for further discussion, see Bhabra 2014).

Alatas (2006a), for example, has argued for sociology to acknowledge the importance of civilizational contexts for the development of autonomous, or alternative, social science traditions. More generally, he has criticized ‘the lack of a multicultural approach in sociology’ (2006a, 5). Autonomous traditions, he argues, need to be ‘informed by local/ regional historical experiences

and cultural practices' as well as by alternative 'philosophies, epistemologies, histories, and the arts' (2010, 37). This is because the autonomy of the different traditions, in his view, rests on historical (and other) phenomena believed to be unique to particular areas or societies. In this context, Western social science becomes a reference point for the divergence (or creativity, as expressed through the appropriation of Western traditions read through local contexts) of other autonomous traditions. There is little discussion, however, of what the purchase of these autonomous traditions would be for a global sociology, beyond a simple multiplicity of sociological 'cultures'.

Multiplicity, or simple pluralization, as has been argued by Dirlik (2003) in the context of similar theorizations of 'multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt 2000; Eisenstadt and Schluchter 1998), serves to contain challenges to the dominant understanding of the topic in question. It does not facilitate a reconstruction of that understanding based on deficiencies associated with an earlier neglect of other experiences of modernity. This can be the case even when theorists seek explicitly to challenge the mono-civilizational accounts of standard definitions (see Göle 2000). Theories of multiple modernities emerged in the late twentieth century in response to the unexpected fall of communism in Europe and a belief in the idea that, as Fukuyama (1992) argued, the 'West' had 'won'. Even for Fukuyama, however, the question emerged that, if this was the case, then why was 'the West' just a universal model, and not universally in existence across all societies in the world. It was in the attempt to explain both the seeming triumph of liberal capitalism and the continuing diversity and heterogeneity of existing societies that led to the reformulation of modernization theory as multiple modernities.³

In developing this new paradigm, theorists of multiple modernities argued that two main fallacies needed to be addressed. The first, advanced against earlier modernization theory, is the claim that there is only one form of (Western) modernization. The second is advanced against critiques made by theorists of underdevelopment and dependency, and suggests that looking from the West to the East was not necessarily a form of Orientalism or Eurocentrism. While it was accepted that the particular historical trajectories and experiences of societies beyond the West needed to be taken into consideration in discussing the subsequent developments of modernity, the originary form of modernity was still nonetheless believed to be a uniquely European phenomenon. The focus of multiple modernities, then, was on the recognition of divergent paths and of the diversity of modern societies, not any reconsideration of what (European) modernity had been understood to be or its

³ See the two special issues of *Daedalus*: 'Early Modernities', *Daedalus* 127 (1998) and 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus* 129 (2000). For further details on the sociological debates on modernization and the shift to multiple modernities, see chapter 3 of my *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination*.

developmental path. This acceptance of plurality and diversity was believed to protect theories of multiple modernities against charges of ethnocentrism or the inappropriate privileging of some histories over others. However, as Dirlak has argued, while the idea of multiple modernities concedes ‘the possibility of culturally different ways of being modern’ (2003, 285), it does so without contesting what it is to be modern and without drawing attention to the social and historical interconnections in which modernity has been constituted and developed (see Bhambra 2007, 2014).

This is because they continue to accept standard historical narratives of modernity, for example, narratives which locate its emergence in a supposed ‘Age of Revolutions’ spanning the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries that bore witness to the American Declaration of Independence and the French and industrial revolutions. While these events are not the only ones to have merited consideration within the periodization popularized by Hobsbawm (2003 [1962]), among others, they are the most frequently cited events and they establish a particular idea of modernity, its initiation and its expansion.⁴ The industrial revolution, for example, is understood to be a European phenomenon that was subsequently diffused globally. However, if we take the cotton factories of Manchester and Lancaster as emblematic of this revolution, then we see that cotton was not a plant that was native to England, let alone to the West (Washbrook 1997). It came from India as did the technology of how to dye and weave it. It was grown in the plantations of the Caribbean and the southern United States by enslaved Africans who were transported there as part of the European trade in human beings. The export of the textile itself relied upon the destruction of the local production of cotton goods in other parts of the world, not simply through price competition but also through direct suppression (Beckert 2014; Bhambra 2007). Zimmerman (2010), for example, documents how cotton production in West Africa was suppressed and undermined in favour of U.S. cotton. In this way, we see that industrialization was not solely a European or Western phenomenon but one that had global conditions for its very emergence and articulation.

The history of modernity, as commonly told, however, rests, as Bhabha argues, on ‘the writing out of the colonial and postcolonial moment’ (1994, 250; see also Chakrabarty 2000). The rest of the world is assumed to be external to the world-historical processes selected for consideration and, concretely, colonial connections significant to the processes under discussion are erased, or rendered silent. Braudel’s three-volume study of ‘Civilization and Capitalism’ is a prime example of this. While he points to the importance of global connections to what is presented as Europe’s industrial revolution,

⁴ For a discussion of the ‘age of revolutions’ within a broader geographical and temporal context, see, for example, Armitage and Subrahmanyam (2010a) and Blackburn (2011).

nowhere in the volumes does he empirically address the substance of those connections, that is, imperialism, enslavement, dispossession and colonialism. Instead, he talks about ‘the discovery of America’ (1985, 388), slavery as part of the solution to a ‘problem’ of a shortage of labour in the Americas, ‘India’s self-inflicted conquest’ (1985, 489) and so on. The failure to offer a systematic account of phenomenon claimed to be European, but demonstrated to be global, I would suggest, is not an error of individual scholarship. It is something that is made possible by the very disciplinary structure of knowledge production that separates the modern (sociology) from the traditional and colonial (anthropology). The consequence is that no space is left for consideration of what could be termed the ‘colonial and postcolonial modern’, that is, the modern that is understood in terms of the global conditions of its emergence (see also Dirlin 2005).

Scholars who have taken on this challenge, such as Anibal Quijano and Walter Mignolo, have precisely argued for ‘modernity’ to be understood as ‘modernity/coloniality’ to highlight the inextricable association between them. The modernity that Europe takes as the context for its own being, as Quijano (2007) argues, is so deeply imbricated in the structures of European colonial domination over the rest of the world that it is impossible to separate the two. Mignolo (2007) further elaborates this distinction in the context of the work of epistemic decolonization necessary to undo the damage wrought by both modernity and by understanding modernity/coloniality only as modernity. By silencing the colonial past within the historical narratives of modernity that are central to the formation of sociology, the discipline itself is called into question. As such, Santos (2014) calls for an ‘epistemology of the South’ that, in acknowledging the distortions created in the production of knowledge by colonialism, would enable the retrieval of different ways of knowing.

In particular, Santos (2007) points to the system of visible and invisible distinctions that structure both social thought and social reality. He argues that those events and processes that are standardly acknowledged – that is, are visible – within understandings of modernity are also constituted by events and processes ‘on the other side of the line’ that are not deemed to be significant for such understandings – that is, they are invisible. This form of thinking legitimates particular inequalities, according to Santos, and their address requires us to move beyond ‘abyssal’ thinking to take into account those aspects that have thus far been silenced. As suggested earlier, the standard accounts of modernity typically acknowledge events within Europe and the United States and ignore consideration both of the global contexts of the emergence of these events and also ignore events beyond these particular geographical sites. Most discussions of the political revolutions seen to be constitutive of the modern world, for example, centre on the American and

French revolutions. The Haitian revolution is rarely considered alongside them despite occurring at around the same time. The contestation and reconfiguration of our understandings of modernity, through the examination of other historical sites, points also to the possibility of a different politics for the present as the following sections will discuss.

III

In the context of the political revolutions that are deemed to have brought modernity into being, the standard accounts given are those of the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution. Both of them form the basis of the classic account, by Palmer (1959), of ‘the age of the democratic revolution’. In it, Palmer argues that while there were a great number of differences between the two revolutions, they nonetheless shared a good deal in common. The key commonality was that the revolutions were essentially ‘democratic’, understood in the broadest terms and, as such, defined the ‘Atlantic civilization’ of which they were a part. ‘Democratic’, in Palmer’s terms, was used to signify ‘a new feeling for a kind of equality, or at least a discomfort with older forms of social stratification’ (1959, 4). Further, the term was used in a political context to deny the exercise of coercive authority by any individual or individuals over others. While many scholars today would question whether these revolutions were actually democratic on the basis of the definitions provided – citing the denial of the franchise to all but propertied white men, the dispossession and genocide of indigenous peoples and the institution of slavery within the United States and the colonies claimed by France, among other aspects – few go on to re-examine the claims made in the context of taking the historical ‘anomalies’ seriously.

Alongside the United States and France, the other countries that Palmer pointed to as sharing in the spirit of the democratic revolutions were, notably, ‘England, Ireland, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy’ (1959, 5). The one democratic revolution within the Atlantic civilization that he misses out is the Haitian Revolution. This is, in part, a consequence of Palmer ending his study of the ‘original’ democratic revolutions in 1799 and leaving all ‘non-Western’ revolutions for the second volume of his study. ‘The eighteenth century’, he writes, ‘saw the Revolution of the Western world; the twentieth century, the Revolution of the non-Western’ (1959: 13). Thus, as Armitage and Subrahmanyam point out, democratic revolution is presented by Palmer as ‘a gift from the North Atlantic world to other peoples who had apparently contributed nothing to its original emancipatory potential’ (2010b, xvii). This narrative of diffusion is a common one. From the work of Marx and Weber onwards, the modern world has been presented as coming into being as a

consequence of the diffusion of ideas and practices whose origins are identified in Europe and the West. There is little discussion of the global conditions of phenomena claimed as ‘European’, as discussed in the context of industrialization and cotton above. Further, there is a lack of consideration of other events and processes that could also be understood as ‘world-historical’.

The revolution in Saint-Domingue that brought into being the new state of Haiti, for example, occurred around the same time as the American and French revolutions (Palmer’s periodization notwithstanding). Yet, it is rarely accorded a similar status, that is, of being a foundational event of world history that brings into being the modern world. While there have been significant accounts of the Haitian revolution – most notably, perhaps, James’s (1989 [1963, 1938]) *The Black Jacobins* – few histories of the general ‘Age of Revolutions’ variety have included it as part of their understanding of that age. As suggested above, Palmer only recognizes it as part of a subsequent wave that merely copied the originators of the North Atlantic, and Hobsbawm (2003 [1962]) scarcely mentions it either. Even avowedly ‘global’ histories of the ‘birth of the modern world’, such as Bayly’s (2004) book of the same title or Osterhammel’s (2014) *Transformation of the World*, devote considerably more attention to the standard historical narratives of modernity than examining other global phenomena and, more significantly, reconsidering their accounts of the global on that basis.

In Bayly’s (2004) analysis, for example, Haiti barely gets a couple of sentences in the book even though the cover presents a striking portrait of Jean-Baptiste Belley. Belley was a Haitian revolutionary and, as a representative of Saint-Domingue, was part of the delegation that travelled to Paris to speak to the Constituent Assembly. A formerly enslaved person, Belley had bought his own liberty through his labour, and argued persuasively and successfully (albeit, in retrospect, temporarily) for the abolition of slavery within the French empire (Dubois 2005, 169–70). Thus, it was only as a consequence of a delegation travelling from Haiti to France that the clause abolishing slavery was included in the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.⁵ The most radical political statement of the French Revolution, then, that is, the one with the greatest universal potential, came from Haiti. Yet, this event is not included in Bayly’s account of the birth of the modern world and, therefore, it leads to no reconsideration of the broader claims of European modernity that are otherwise being made and sustained. The dominant understandings of modernity that see it as formed in processes endogenous to Europe and abstracted from the entanglements of colonialism and Empire

5 This fact is missed from many such accounts and even Hobsbawm (2003 [1962]) attributes the abolition of slavery to the Jacobins of France rather than to the ‘Black Jacobins’ of whom James (1989 [1963, 1938]) wrote in 1938.

remain in place. Other events, to the extent that they are mentioned, simply add a descriptive embellish to the standard narratives, but do not transform them.

Osterhammel's (2014) account of Haiti in 'the transformation of the world' is similarly brief and provides little by way of reconceptualization of the global. There are just over three pages of discussion of the revolution in its own terms (2014, 528–32) in a book of over a thousand pages. Whenever it is mentioned throughout the rest of the book it is usually in terms of the implications of the revolution for France. As he writes, France lost many of its North American colonies in the late eighteenth century and 'suffered a further sharp setback in 1804, when its economically most important colony, the sugarproducing Saint-Domingue portion of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, renamed itself Haiti and declared independence' (2014, 400). No mention here of the fact that the revolution was one carried out by enslaved Africans who had been taken to the island by Europeans as part of the trade in human beings. Nor any discussion of the global connections of the revolution that linked not only Haiti to France but also to West Africa (see Thornton 1993). Osterhammel later goes on to mention Haiti in the context of failed states where, as he writes, 'neither its political institution building nor its socio-economic development had made much progress' (2014, 409) in the hundred years of its existence. There is no corresponding mention of the devastating twenty-year economic blockade by France of the new nation which was only lifted in 1825 on the agreement to pay France compensation for its loss of 'property'. Compensation was paid, that is, for the loss of 'property' embodied in those human beings who had been enslaved and now had the temerity to emancipate themselves. They, however, were not, in turn, to be compensated for their enslavement and dispossession.⁶

As Dubois (2005) argues, Haiti was punished for its revolution then and, it seems, scholars are still unwilling to acknowledge its import today (see also Trouillot 1995). To the extent that the Haitian revolution does get discussed within standard 'Age of Revolutions' narratives, the debate often seems to pivot on the following question, as noted by Sala-Molins: 'did Haiti make her revolution or did the French revolution spread to the colonies?' (2006, 122). Indeed, Osterhammel's framing of the Haitian revolution is that it 'should be

6 Compensation was set at 150 million francs and, to put this into context it should be mentioned that, at around the same time, France sold the entire territory of Louisiana to the fledgling United States for 80 million francs. Unable to pay the coerced indemnity, as Dubois argues, 'the Haitian government took loans from French banks, entering a cycle of debt that would last into the twentieth century' (2005, 304). Osterhammel does mention the 'exorbitant compensation' about 400 pages later, but this is in the context of celebrating Charles X signing a 'bilateral trade agreement with Haiti in 1825', thereby setting a European precedent 'by recognizing the breakaway black republic' (2014, 844). In the same sentence he discusses the 'dispossessed French landowners' but does not mention that what they were dispossessed of was their claim to own other human beings.

understood as a direct consequence of the revolution in France' (2014, 529). While such Franco-centric historical accounts of the revolution may concede the uprising to Toussaint L'Ouverture's leadership, they rarely acknowledge any other source of inspiration;⁷ that is, as Sala-Molins (2006) highlights, the actions may have occurred in Haiti, but they are seen to have occurred as a consequence of ideas and influences from France and the European Enlightenment more generally. The inescapable conclusion of such a trajectory of thought is that 'there was no Haitian Revolution: there was only a Saint-Domingue episode of the French Revolution' (Sala-Molins 2006, 123). However, as Sala-Molins argues, if Haiti's black liberators are going to be made disciples of the Enlightenment, 'then logic requires that things be clarified: these liberators subverted the language of the Enlightenment and gave it a meaning it did not have' (2006, 124) – a meaning that would subsequently be rescinded by the supposed initiators of Enlightenment.

The recent focus on Haiti within contemporary scholarship is due in no small part to the endeavours of scholars such as Trouillot (1995), Geggus (2002), Fischer (2004) and Dubois (2004, 2005), among many others. Building on the seminal work of James (1989 [1963, 1938]), they have retrieved and made accessible to wider audiences the histories of the Haitian Revolution.⁸ Before these accounts, in the nineteenth century, knowledge of the Haitian revolution circulated extensively among communities in struggle. It was significant to revolts of enslaved peoples in the United States (Geggus 2001; Jackson and Bacon 2010), to the independence movements of Latin America and the Caribbean (Dubois 2004), to the cultural renaissance in Harlem and elsewhere (Jackson 2008) and to the Maori movements for justice and equality (Shilliam 2012), among many other such events. These broader, and earlier, resonances of Haiti suggest that the silence of the Haitian revolution is a silence primarily in the academy where we have failed to take seriously the significance of the revolution and to learn anew from it. So, what might we learn about the birth of the modern world and its transformation (and the politics of knowledge production, more generally) if we took the Haitian revolution seriously?

7 Hobsbawm's comments on the Haitian Revolution, for example, point only to the idea of French inspiration. First he suggests that the French 'abolished slavery in the French colonies, in order to encourage the Negroes of San Domingo to fight for the Republic' (93) and then, a few pages later, writes about 'the movements of colonial liberation inspired by the French Revolution (as in San Domingo)' (115).

8 C. L. R James' classic work was itself preceded by that of Anna Julia Cooper who successfully defended her PhD thesis on 'The Attitude of France on the Question of Slavery between 1789 and 1848' at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1925. In the dissertation, Cooper (1925) questioned the impact of slavery on the debates in the revolutionary period in France and compared the revolution in France with that in San Domingue. Her dissertation was subsequently published in English as 'Slavery and the French and Haitian Revolutionists' (Cooper 2006). For discussion, see May (2008). I am indebted to Jeanette Ehrmann for drawing my attention to the work of Anna Julia Cooper on Haiti.

First, in terms of Haiti itself, we would learn about the ways in which those who had been enslaved, on achieving their freedom and independence, honoured the people who preceded them on the land. In renaming Saint-Domingue as Haiti, they honoured the name given to the island by the Taino Arawak people who were wiped out by Spanish and French colonization (see Geggus 2002, 207–20). Second, we would learn that on achieving freedom and establishing the independence of Haiti, the working out of the Haitian constitution was itself predicated on an understanding of citizenship that had greater universal applicability than similar notions developed in the French Revolution. According to Fischer (2004, 266), by making freedom from enslavement and racial discrimination the bedrock of political understandings and unlinking citizenship from race, the Haitian constitution radicalized and universalized the idea of equality. At the time that the revolutionary leaders were calling for ‘the immediate, universal abolition of slavery’, in the 1790s, there was no similar such call elsewhere in the Atlantic world (Nesbitt 2008, 13). In light of this, it is no wonder that Trouillot (1995) suggests that the Haitian revolution was the most radical of its age and silenced, precisely, for its radical nature.

As discussed above, it is the circumscribed accounts of the ‘North Atlantic’ revolutions of the United States and France that are standardly understood as foundational for understanding the world-historical significance of democracy and its universal claims. Indeed, Osterhammel goes further to suggest that one reason for the relative silence about the Haitian revolution is that ‘it seemed to emit no universalizable political message over and above a call for the liberation of slaves throughout the world’ (2014, 531). This extraordinary political act, it should be noted, occurred as the American Revolution maintained enslavement and segregation of its populations and the French maintained forms of domination and exclusion with their colonies and over their colonized populations, with Napoleon reintroducing slavery in the French colonies in 1802. Despite the limited nature of these ‘democratic revolutions’, their appeal is seen by commentators such as Osterhammel and Bayly as universalizable, while the call for equality and freedom by the Haitian revolutionaries is not.

IV

What is important to recognize, however, is how the issue is not simply to rectify an omission by acknowledging its particular significance in its own terms – the implication of arguments for a sociological multiculturalism like that of Alatas (2006a) – but to understand how that omission structures and distorts hegemonic accounts such as those, for example, of European cultural

'identity' and its 'others'. Rosanvallon's (2013) recent book, *The Society of Equals*, mentions Santo Domingo (as the French colony is named by the translator) on page 16, alongside the United States and France, as one of the fundamental sites of the new spirit of equality that animated the revolution of modernity. It is then never returned to through the rest of its 384 pages. Instead, the discussion of equality – its historical conditions and contemporary political possibilities – is articulated through a discussion of selective episodes of U.S. and French history. As such, Rosanvallon appears to believe that equality can be conceptualized through a discussion of U.S. and French history that fails to not only address issues of dispossession, appropriation, enslavement and colonization as limits to the contemporary ideological understandings of equality but also consider these as perhaps the very negation of those understandings.⁹ In this section, I discuss the significance of the omission of the Haitian Revolution, both in its own terms and in terms of the implications of such omissions for social scientific considerations of 'the global' through a reading of Rosanvallon (2013).¹⁰

The idea of the 'society of equals' at the heart of Rosanvallon's (2013) book concerns the forging of a world of like human beings, a society of autonomous individuals and a community of citizens. What is needed, he argues, is a revised understanding of equality that starts from the position of singularity and distinction rather than a 'homogenizing' universality. That is, he seeks to conceptualize equality from an acknowledgement of the many ways in which we, as individuals, are different, rather than by way of what we might share. Indeed, one of the poisons of equality, he suggests, is separatism – group identity in all its varieties – which undercuts the commonality constituted by a democratic equality of individuals and, paradoxically, can also derive from a universalistic imaginary. In this way, Rosanvallon moves from the idea of the universal to the idea of the individual and only addresses 'group' identity implicitly in terms of its

9 Interestingly, Rosanvallon has written at length, elsewhere, on his choice of method – philosophical history – where the 'central objective is to apprehend an issue by placing it within the context of its emergence' (2001, 194). The point for Rosanvallon is to write 'a history that could be qualified as comprehensive' through a 'self-conscious immersion in the very questions investigated by the authors themselves' (2001, 197). That is, for Rosanvallon, a philosophical history of concepts, such as those associated with 'the society of equals', could only be deemed to be adequate to the extent that it engaged with the questions that were of concern to those about whom the history is being written. As we will go on to see in the rest of this chapter, the colonial context of Haiti was of deep and abiding concern to the actors and events central to the period that Rosanvallon is interested in, but they do not constitute any aspect of his analysis. As such, in terms of his own explicitly stated standards, Rosanvallon falls short. I am grateful to James Ingram for drawing my attention to this point.

10 The arguments made in this section are developed from comments first published on the Theory, Culture, Society website on 30 October 2014 at <http://theoryculturesociety.org/gurminder-bhambra-what-does-the-haitian-revolution-tell-us-about-the-society-of-equals/> and on 25 November 2014 at <http://theoryculturesociety.org/gurminder-bhambra-on-thessociety-of-equals-part-two-some-groups-are-more-equal-than-other-groups/>.

contemporary threat, as a form of separatism, to the ‘society of equals’ he wishes to be established. However, he does not address how groups come to understand themselves as such and so naturalizes both the process of group formation and of understandings of membership within groups.

Much as white males, for example, might have believed themselves to be neither gendered nor in possession of an ethnicity, but simply embodiments of a universal, so throughout the book, Rosanvallon works with a conception of the French nation that sees its population, historically, as constituted solely in terms of its white citizens. He does not mention the many debates over who was to be a citizen and how membership was to be claimed. Group identity is presented by him as a later disruption into a society of individuals, notwithstanding that such a society was constituted by exclusions of others on the basis of characteristics ascribed to them as members of groups. The Code Noir, for example, was established in the late seventeenth century to regulate the lives of the enslaved in the French Caribbean. It was extended in subsequent years to cover the conditions governing the lives of those within French colonies and those who had migrated from the colonies to the French national state (Riddell 1925; Stovall 2006). It was, as Stovall (2006) argues, one of the first major examples of the conflict between political and legal equality and racial discrimination within the French state. Beyond this, however, it was also ‘the only comprehensive legislation which applied to the whole population, both black and white . . . affecting social, religious and property relationships between all classes’ (Palmer 1996, 363). The decree applied to all within the imperial territories of the French state, including Saint-Domingue and Louisiana, and also governed the lives of those deemed other within the French national state.

There is no discussion within Rosanvallon’s book of what implications the demand for inclusion by the delegation from Saint-Domingue had for understandings of being a French citizen. Initially, this delegation had sought simple inclusion and representation within the new revolutionary state. It was only on being denied this that full independence was then sought and equality established on their own terms within the new state of Haiti.¹¹ The failure to engage with the complex relationship between France and Haiti impoverishes Rosanvallon’s arguments. Ultimately, the failure to transcend racial categories (or their own group identity as white) that had white French citizens deny the claim for participation and representation being made by black appellants suggests that the idea of equality, in its dominant French articulation, was, and is, limited by race (see Geggus 1989). This limitation is not just on the

11 This parallels an argument made by Allen (2014) regarding the establishment of the United States.

basis of effecting an exclusion but also points to the relations of domination that were under challenge at the time.

This tumultuous period offers up a moment of history in which arguments for universal (male) equality transcended, however fleetingly, the racial divisions that were otherwise being maintained. It is through consideration of the broader debates and arguments of this time that we could learn more about what it would take, truly, to create a ‘society of singular equals’. And, yet, Rosanvallon neglects to address this aspect of revolutionary French history and its significance for the present. By not addressing this initial exclusionary moment (or then subsequent ones in the context of Algeria and other colonies claimed by France), Rosanvallon also cannot account for later demands made by those such as the Indigènes de la République (see Grewal 2009). He understands them as separatist claims that would undercut a society of equals established on the democratic equality of all citizens understood as individuals. Indeed, Rosanvallon argues that the solidarities of immigrant communities are somehow in breach of the foundational equality of citizenship within the French nation. This, despite the fact that some of the people who claimed citizenship, as individuals, would have been denied it on the basis of ascribed membership to groups by those very citizens who understood themselves as ‘equals’. The repercussions of this in the present are profound (see Vergès 2010).

Throughout the book, Rosanvallon equates equality with sameness or homogeneity of membership within a community. This, after all, is the way in which he is able to discuss equality in the round without any reference to the limiting historical instances of enslavement or colonization – those who were enslaved or colonized are not recognized as members of the communities under discussion. This sameness of community is linked to notions of citizenship and has disturbing connotations in terms of identifying those towards whom we might be obliged to act equitably. If the political community of France had been extended to include also the colonial possessions of France, then different understandings of equality may have been possible. This would have been further facilitated by taking the case of Haiti seriously. However, Haiti remains invisible, ‘on the other side of the line’, that Santos (2007) suggests bifurcates abyssal thinking and radically excludes all that is produced as non-existent.

For Rosanvallon, taking Haiti seriously would have forced him to confront the fact that as Haitians fought for self-emancipation, they did so from that country otherwise presented as the fount of liberty and equality and brotherhood (or, more simply, modernity) – France. It is this that explains why Rosanvallon, while referencing Santo Domingo, cannot consider it further, because to do so with any seriousness would cause him to have to reflect on its implications for the whole theoretical edifice of his understanding of

equality. It would require a radical reconstruction of the very idea of equality through the engagement with and development of traditions not usually presented as central within the academy. It is significant that Rosanvallon (2013) uses the earlier Spanish name for the island – Santo Domingo (or, in the original French version, Saint-Domingue) – rather than that chosen by the self-emancipated citizens, Haiti. Even in its naming, Rosanvallon chooses to efface the momentous achievements of the Haitian Revolution and to defer consideration of how the ideas of equality that emerged in this revolution could contribute to, challenge, and inform contemporary understandings of equality and what it would take to create a society of equals.

V

The perspective of ‘connected sociologies’, with which I wish to conclude, starts from a recognition that events are constituted by processes that are always broader than the selections that bound events as particular and specific to their theoretical constructs. It is inspired by the call, by historian Subrahmanyam (1997), for ‘connected histories’. ‘Connected sociologies’¹² recognizes a plurality of possible interpretations and selections, not as a ‘description’ of events and processes but as an opportunity for reconsidering what we previously thought we had known. The different sociologies in need of connection are themselves located in time and space, including the time and space of colonialism, empire and (post)colonialism. They will frequently arise as discordant and challenging voices and may even be resisted on that basis (a resistance made easier by the geospatial stratification of the academy). The consequence of different perspectives must be to open up examination of events and processes such that they are understood differently in light of that engagement. Put another way, engaging with different voices must move us beyond simple pluralism to make a difference to what was initially thought – not so that we come to think the same, but that we think differently from how we had previously thought before our engagement (see Holmwood 2007).

Much contemporary sociology and political thought sidesteps the issue of historical global interconnections – those connections argued for in the call to take seriously the Haitian Revolution as a world-historical event. They often only regard as significant those connections that brought European modernity to other societies. Although, of course, they rarely address the actual historical processes of colonialism, enslavement and dispossession that were involved in the making of such connections. Rather, these are euphemized under terms

12 For a fuller elaboration of the claims made here, please see Bhambra (2014).

such as European contact or mere diffusion. In this way, theorists continue to assert the necessary priority of the West in the construction of conceptual categories and end up privileging the same understanding of modernity and modern societies as earlier scholars. As Santos (2014) has suggested, there is a cognitive injustice at work here and its sociological address requires a radical revision of Western sociology's self-understanding. It should be noted that such a revision necessarily decentres that European self-understanding, but it is inclusionary and 'universalizable' to the extent that it seeks to address connections at the same time as displacing 'myths of origins'.

A 'connected sociologies' approach, then, enables us to locate Europe within wider processes, address the ways in which Europe created and then benefitted from the legacies of colonialism and enslavement and examine what Europe needs to learn from those it dispossessed in order to address the problems we currently face. 'Connected sociologies' point to the work needed in common to make good on the promise of a reinvigorated sociological imagination in service of social justice in a global world.

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Chapter 3

Decolonizing Feminism: Reflections from the Latin American Context¹

Rosalva Aída Hernández Castillo

It has been over thirty years since Chandra Mohanty wrote her now-classic article ‘Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses’ (Mohanty 1986), in which she denounced the way in which feminism was colonizing the lives of so-called ‘Third World’ women. Anglo-Saxon feminists rejected this controversial article, unable to stomach the fact that this young scholar dared to accuse them of being colonizers. After all, Mohanty had only recently arrived from India as a postgraduate student, while they were academics who dedicated their own work to ‘women’s’ emancipation. However, Mohanty’s work merely translated into academic language what was already a gnawing unease among many indigenous, peasant and poor women in different political spaces in Latin America – namely that although striving to save women, feminists did not actually understand women’s problems, did not listen to them and as such failed to include their most heartfelt concerns in their political agendas.

To criticize feminism for silencing certain voices was one thing, but to openly denounce it as a form of colonialism was something else altogether. Such a critique fundamentally questioned the ‘epistemic violence’ resulting from a particular world outlook and way of understanding justice and emancipation becoming elevated as the only path to ‘liberation’ from domination. Not only did such a critique accuse feminist agendas of failing to grapple with the problems of indigenous and peasant women, but, more importantly, it also accused them of erasing these women’s entire existence. Drawing on Boaventura de Sousa Santos’ work on the ‘sociology of absences’, we can say that, by assuming that an analysis of ‘patriarchy’ as the only criteria

¹ An earlier version of this chapter was published in Spanish in Millán Margara, ed., *Mas Allá del Feminismo. Caminos por Andar, Red de Feminismos Descoloniales*. Mexico: Pez en el Agua, 2014. See also Hernández Castillo 2016. The updated text was translated by Kolya Abramsky.

for true emancipation, monocultural feminist knowledge has condemned indigenous women to a form of ‘non-existence’. Such feminism is based in a monocultural conception of linear time. History is seen as progressing in one direction only, namely that corresponding to Western feminist struggles having obtained liberal rights for women. Conversely, indigenous women were located in the backwards part of such a timeline, and were considered as pre-modern women. Such an approach was also based in a monocultural naturalization of difference, in which ethnic and class hierarchies become naturalized. All of this meant that urban feminists were tasked with the ‘civilizing mission’ of liberating indigenous, peasant and other poor women (De Sousa Santos 2009).

Finally, this erasure was the result of a logic of the dominant scale in which the universal was prioritized over the local, based around one particular perspective on rights, emancipation and justice. Local Western knowledge became globalized through the concept of ‘universal rights’. Latin American states, with the support of feminist NGOs, began to play a very important role in attributing gender inequalities in indigenous regions to cultural factors, while at the same time defining a universal discourse on women’s rights in non-cultural terms. Thus, modernizing developmentalist discourses blamed indigenous cultures and their so-called ‘traditional governance structures’ for being solely responsible for women’s exclusion. As alternatives, they promoted development and a ‘decultured’ discourse of rights (Hernández Castillo 2010).

Nation states have promoted women’s rights through programmes aimed at incorporating women into development, as well as through certain international commitments to incorporate a limited gender perspective into their public policies. This has resulted in the concept of ‘women’s rights’ becoming a form of ‘globalized localism’. My aim in this chapter is to discuss how feminist research has been complicit in ‘silencing’ the multiple voices which do not subscribe to this discourse which sees rights and democracy as the only way to construct a dignified life. Feminist research in Mexico has also reproduced this kind of epistemological colonialism.

From the beginning of the 1990s, organized indigenous women began to denounce this form of epistemological colonialism, stressing that a necessary precondition for fully exercising their rights as women was the recognition of their collective rights as indigenous peoples (Hernández Castillo and Sierra 2005). In this respect, they defended their indigenous Cosmovisions as the fundamental conceptual starting point from which to question the West’s civilizing project (Cumbre de Mujeres Indígenas de América 2003). Voices such as these played a vital role in the emergence of new theoretical approaches for decolonizing feminism (Bidaseca and Vázquez Laba 2011; Suarez Navaz and Hernández Castillo 2008).

Numerous challenges confront those of us who have embarked on the difficult task of decolonizing our feminisms. We are faced with the need to recognize our own ethnocentrism and reject the logic of power which produces the ‘non-existence’ of indigenous and peasant women. However, at the same time, we must also avoid ‘orientalizing’ strategies (Said 1990 [1973]) which represent indigenous cultures as our ‘otherness’, as possessors of a ‘primordial knowledge’ that is fundamental to our own emancipation. Using our representations to burden these women with the ‘responsibility of saving us’ through their ‘alternative knowledge’ is in fact just another form of colonialism. Such an approach fails to nourish the kind of critical intercultural dialogues which we need to be having.

In this chapter, I discuss my personal experiences with three intercultural dialogues. Each of these has taught me very important lessons for decolonizing my own feminism, and has led me to reframe the way in which I understand emancipation from, and resistance against, patriarchal powers within the context of neoliberal globalization. The first dialogue has been with indigenous women organized through the Continental Network of Indigenous Women [Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas]. This organization has taught me about the need to broaden my own conception of gender rights to include a non-individualistic perspective of being a woman, and to reconsider the problem of domination from a more holistic perspective which includes the relations not only between men and women, women and women and men and men but also between human beings and nature. The second dialogue has been with indigenous and Mestiza women prisoners. These women have taught me how, even in such a totalizing state institution as the prison in which it appears as if no space for resistance exists, shared oral history and collective reflection can become a tool for reconstructing trajectories of exclusion and for visibilizing how racism, patriarchy and capitalism intersect with one another. The third dialogue I have had is with two extraordinary indigenous leaders: Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosenda Cantú, both of whom are members of the Me’phaa Indigenous People’s Organization (OPIM) [Organización de Pueblos Indígenas Mephaa’s]. As a result of winning a court case against the Mexican state at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (ICHR) [Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos], these two women forced the Secretary of the Interior to publicly admit that the Mexican state had perpetrated ‘institutional military violence against indigenous peoples’. Inés and Valentina’s struggle for justice included denouncing their rape as part of a continuum of violence against the Me’phaa indigenous people, and they insisted that any sentence must also award reparations to the whole community. Through this, I came to understand that in addition to being a violation of individual women’s sexual and reproductive rights, rape against indigenous women was also another manifestation of colonialism.

In this chapter, I want to draw lessons from these three dialogues in order to reflect on the strategic possibilities they offer for decolonizing our feminisms.

QUESTIONING MY OWN FEMINISM

Before embarking on discussing these three intercultural dialogues and their lessons for decolonizing feminism, I would like to share a bit about my own genealogy and the experiences which made me question my way of life and my understanding of feminism. The voices of organized indigenous women, combined with my own critical reflections on how academic feminisms were a form of discursive colonialism, made me question the methodological approach taken by the feminist organization that I belonged to at the end of the 1980s in San Cristobal de las Casas. San Cristobal is the administrative centre of a region that is majority indigenous, a ladina city surrounded by marginal Tsotsil indigenous communities. However, it was not just my academic feminist readings which led me to question how certain hegemonic urban feminisms involved colonizing practices. I have lived for long periods in Mayan communities in the mountains and jungles of Chiapas. This has brought me closer not only to other forms of knowledge but also to indigenous peoples' political and organizational experiences. This experience led me to reconsider many of my Marxist and feminist perspectives on resistance and social struggle, thereby incorporating a critique of internal racism and colonialism as a fundamental axis of political struggle.

During these years, I came to experience state repression and the criminalization of social movements first hand, as many of my female friends suffered repression and sexual violence at the hands of governmental forces. These experiences led me to participate in the founding of a broad movement of women against state violence, and against sexual and domestic violence. This movement subsequently became the feminist organization Colectivo de Encuentros entre Mujeres (Collective for Meetings between Women) (COLEM) which I belonged to for ten years. My experience of questioning and struggling against patriarchal violence in COLEM, together with my reflections on internal racism and colonialism towards indigenous peoples which I did as an anthropologist working at the Center for Research and Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology (CIESAS), led me to think in terms of political alliances. I began to see the need for building a politics of solidarity between a diversity of men and women.

At this political crossroads, it was indigenous women themselves who gave me insights as to how to rethink indigenous demands from a non-essentialist perspective. The way in which they theorized culture, tradition and gender equity, as captured in political documents, reports from meetings and public

discourses, as well as being systematized in writings by their intellectuals, provide essential perspectives for decolonizing feminism.

First Dialogue: The Continental Network of Indigenous Women – Indigenous women's use of Cosmovision as a tool for political struggle

I have had the possibility of closely following the establishment and consolidation of the Continental Network of Indigenous Women since its inception. I have learnt from its members about other ways of understanding culture and rethinking the links that exist between the tasks of decolonization and breaking down patriarchy. The network was created in 1993 at the initiative of Canadian indigenous women. It comprises of fifty-two women's organizations from seventeen countries in North, Central and South America, and serves as an international coordination body that offers a space for exchanging experiences, developing joint initiatives and giving visibility to indigenous women in the international arena (Berrio Palomo 2004).

By recovering ancestral spirituality and also reinventing new more inclusive practices and rituals, organized indigenous women throughout the Americas are paving the way for simultaneously rethinking culture from the perspective of gender and gender from the perspective of culture.

Analyses of religious spaces as spaces of resistance against various forms of domination have been at the forefront of anthropology and sociology of religion for decades (Marcos 2011). Work showing how ritual spaces allow social actors to reject, contest or negotiate with the structures of domination which shape their lives has revealed the fallacies of the old Marxist premise that 'religion is the opiate of the people'. Within this field of analysis, I am interested in reflecting on the way in which the members of the Continental Network of Indigenous Women are reasserting their indigenous spirituality. Particularly important in this respect is how organized women in Mexico and Guatemala are using indigenous spirituality to resist globalization's drive towards homogeneity and the de-cultured policies of nation states. At the same time, indigenous spirituality is also being used to confront the ethnocentrism of certain liberal feminisms which understand emancipation from the standpoint of the individual and a rhetoric of equality.

The varied genealogies and organizational experiences of the participants in this fledgling continental movement of indigenous women have influenced the degree to which the tools and critiques of Latin American feminisms have been appropriated or not. Some of these indigenous women, especially in Mexico and Guatemala, have now begun to speak about the existence of indigenous feminisms. These feminisms prioritize reflection and practice aimed at transforming inequalities between the genders. However, other parts

of the indigenous struggle have rejected the concept of feminism outright in favour of reasserting the indigenous Cosmovision as a space from which to rethink the relations of power between men and women. The discourse and the practice of some indigenous feminisms, such as that promoted by members of the Kaqla group in Guatemala, or by some members of the Guerreran Coordination of Indigenous Women [Coordinadora Guerrerense de Mujeres Indígenas], is much closer and more akin to the agenda of feminist organizations. Consequently, there is now some room for building political alliances. However, the ethnocentrism shown by certain sectors of the academy and certain strands of feminist activism hinders dialogue with those indigenous women who reassert the Cosmovision, as these feminists have scarcely explored the emancipatory potential which indigenous spirituality may offer them.

Despite the fact that certain feminisms resist and reject these culturally situated perspectives, such proposals already occupy an important place within the continental movement of indigenous women. Ever since the First Summit of Indigenous Women of the Americas [Primera Cumbre de Mujeres Indígenas de América], which took place in the city of Oaxaca in 2002, these voices have grown in importance.

Indigenous women, by way of their own organic intellectuals who have participated in continental events over the past decade, are developing their own theoretical approaches. This is reflected in the resolutions of the First Summit, in which a central premise in the discussions of the Working Group on Education, Spirituality and Culture was the defence of complementarity and duality. The declaration from this working group stated:

We recognize spirituality as the basis of indigenous knowledge and education, and for this reason we must strengthen and maintain them with respect . . . We propose to construct our own identity by rescuing the knowledge of our ancestors, listening to their voices and also to our spiritual voices, in order to choose our path and construct our future. We reaffirm the need to cultivate spirituality, testifying, sharing our own experiences and knowledge, benefiting from mutual energies and assuming our cultural concepts and beliefs. We are once again upholding the indigenous Cosmovision, which is nothing other than indigenous peoples' science. We recognize our elders, men and women alike, as bearers of ancestral wisdom and as the masters of future generations. We strengthen our community spiritual practices whereby adults teach young people and children through example. Through practicing our principles and enhancing our abilities to strengthen our knowledge, we are reaffirming that we value spirituality as the backbone of our culture. (Cumbre de Mujeres Indígenas de América 2003, 128)

These reassessments of indigenous women's own spirituality and epistemology provoked rejection, both from the more conservative sections of the Catholic

Church and from liberal feminists alike. The Episcopal Commission of the Indigenous Pastoral [Comisión Episcopal de la Pastoral Indígena] sent an accusatory letter to the First Summit of Indigenous Women of the Americas. The letter criticized them for approaching spirituality ‘from a perspective that was completely alien to the cultural, spiritual and ethnic diversity which our indigenous peoples are comprised of’ and for ‘imposing a concept of sexual and reproductive rights which lead to population control programmes which threaten the values of motherhood and of life, both of which are fundamental concepts in indigenous cultures’. This debate highlighted the polarized perspectives concerning the rights of indigenous women, and above all the strategies, deployed by Catholic conservatism and liberal feminism alike, through which indigenous women become erased and condemned to ‘non-existence’ (Lamas 2002, 2003; Monsiváis 2002a, 2002b, 2003).

Within the context of this debate, Sylvia Marcos denounced the way in which intellectuals and religious figures, of many different shades, have adopted a strategy of silencing and victimizing indigenous women and denying them of their social agency: ‘The words of indigenous women have been expropriated long enough. This summit brought together the voices of more than 400 non-urban women, women who are struggling for their rights and reasserting their ancestral Cosmovisions and their “spirituality”. We must stop turning their concerns into the subject of debates among intellectuals, since they have their own voice and have expressed it in their documents and interviews’ (Marcos 2002, 29).

In contrast with the polarized visions of Mexican intellectuals, the discourses developed by the indigenous women themselves elaborated complex perspectives about duality and gender. However, these discourses were neither listened to nor read by the very people who claimed to speak on behalf of ‘oppressed indigenous women’. Starting from this understanding of Cosmovision and of spirituality, indigenous women advocated a concept of gender which implied

a respectful, sincere, equitable relation of balance and equilibrium, similar to what is known as [gender] equity in the west; a relation based on respect and harmony, in which men and women alike have opportunities, without this implying a greater burden on women. Women’s role is more one of facilitating. Only in this way is it possible to be well spiritually in relation to other human beings, the Earth, the sky, and the elements of nature that give us oxygen . . . For us, when we talk about gender we mean abiding by the concept of Duality that exists in the indigenous Cosmovision and which is rooted in an understanding that the whole universe is regulated in terms of Duality. The sky, the Earth, happiness and sadness, night and day are all dualities which complement each other, and none of which cannot exist without the other. Ten days with only sun would be unbearable, and we would die. Everything is regulated by Duality. Undoubtedly, this also includes the relations between men and women.

(Estela, indigenous woman from the Political Association of Mayan Women [Asociación Política de Mujeres Mayas], Moloj, Mayib' Ixoquib', Guatemala, cited in Gabriel Xiquín 2004)

It is clear that from these perspectives that the concept of complementarity is not some ruse by which to avoid talking about power and violence in gender relations. Rather, it has become a tool for critique which indigenous women are using to challenge the colonizing attitudes of indigenous men, thus highlighting the need to rethink culture from the perspective of gender equity. Each of these principles and values that indigenous women defend as part of their Cosmovision serves to decentre discourses of power which both neoliberalism and patriarchal structures have sought to legitimate.

Faced with the rampant individualism of globalizing capitalism, indigenous women put forward the value of 'community, understood as the close relations between people living within the same environment based on respect and equality and in which no one is superior to anyone else'. Faced with the predatory effects of neoliberal developmentalism, they raise the banner of 'Equilibrium. This refers to the safeguarding of life and the permanence of all beings in space and nature, in which the rational use of material resources drives us to equilibrium and integrity in our life, while the destruction of some species affects all other beings'. Faced with the liberal conception of survival of the fittest, in which the strongest exert violence and domination over the weakest, indigenous women cry 'Respect. This is rooted in the indigenous understanding that our elders are to be offered the highest level of respect, and respect must also extend to all the other natural beings. The Earth is seen as a Mother and Goddess, identified as a woman who understands the task of nourishing all beings to mean treating them all equally and on the same terms'. Faced with the patriarchal claim of masculine's superiority over feminine, indigenous women propose 'Duality or Dualism. This means that the feminine and the masculine co-exist as one single deity, two energetic forces within a single whole which allows for equilibrium in vision and action. It is this integrity in everything which leads us to complementarity. To see the Supreme Being as dual, both a father and a mother, enables us to act with gender equity, and this attitude is vital for eradicating machismo'. And finally, when faced with the fragmentation of the productive process and the division of the labour force promoted by maquila-based development, faced with the fragmentation of collective imaginaries and the shying away from systemic analysis which allows us to see how different struggles are interconnected, indigenous women assert:

The Four-ness [La cuatriedad]. This refers to the totality of cosmic equilibrium, a whole represented in the four cardinal points which make up the unity and

totality of the universe. To see both forwards and backwards at the same time, while also being able to see to each side, is at the heart of what it means to struggle for unity. It is a force capable of transforming the inequalities which our peoples suffer from due to neoliberal and globalizing policies. (*Cumbre de Mujeres Indígenas de América* 2003, 132)

Recovering these theoretical approaches and recognizing their emancipatory potential does not imply idealizing contemporary indigenous cultures. While their proposals tell us of a Cosmovision rooted in important values that must be recovered and made operational, this should not be seen as suggesting that people already live this culture in their daily lives. On the contrary, the women themselves acknowledge that major differences currently exist in relation to the situation of women and men, but that does not mean this has always been so. However, the situation offers the possibility for grasping at the roots and recovering the space which women occupy in the indigenous Cosmovision. To discount these proposals just because they do not stem from our own perspective of equality or are not understood in the same way as we think about them in urban and Mestizo regions is to reproduce those very mechanisms of silencing and excluding political movements, movements already scarred by patriarchal perspectives.

Second Dialogue: Oral history as a tool for breaking down multiple oppressions at the Atlacholoaya Women's Social Correction Centre

Another of the important lessons in my feminist trajectory has come from my dialogues with indigenous and peasant women prisoners in a Social Correction Centre (CERESO) [Centro de Readaptación Social] in the state of Morelos. I arrived at the Atlacholoaya Women's Social Correction Centre in 2008, thinking that my anthropological research on the Mexican justice system could contribute to improving women's access to justice (see Hernández Castillo 2013). However, I had no inkling as to how these women's reflections and experiences would actually change my own life.

This experience made me aware of the importance of oral history as a tool for feminist reflection and as a strategy for destabilizing racist and sexist colonial discourses. Feminist theorists have written extensively about the importance of using oral history to recover the history of women's daily lives and for taking account their experiences. However, I did not imagine that oral history could also be used to collectively reconstruct individual histories so as to build sisterhood between diverse women and to write a counter history which would clearly reveal the way in which coloniality of power scars indigenous and peasant women's lack of access to justice.

In this context, oral history became a means of collective reflection through which to destabilize the ‘monocultural naturalization of differences’. It reveals the way in which ethnic and class hierarchies mark the inmates’ different trajectories of exclusion and their lack of access to justice. Sharing and reflecting on their life stories the women are able to contrast the experiences of indigenous and non-indigenous women, of peasant women and women workers and professionals and of homosexuals and heterosexuals. Thus, they are able to cast light on the hierarchies that define Mexico’s justice system, as well as Mexican society in its entirety.

In order to engage ethnographically with the prison space, I decided to record the life stories of indigenous prisoners at the Women’s Social Correction Centre in Morelos, locally known as Atlacholoaya Women’s Social Correction Centre.

From the outset, I was interested to deploy collaborative methodologies within the prison in order to research the question of indigenous women’s access to justice. This presented me with unfamiliar challenges, as it did not involve working with women who were already struggling for social justice. Nor did it involve accompanying organizational processes which I was already a part of. Initially, we considered approaching a human rights or women’s rights organization and asking them to take on our research proposal as their own. However, in the end, a different form of collaboration took shape.

Through my personal networks, I was invited to participate in a workshop series which was being organized in Atlacholoaya Women’s Social Correction Centre in Morelos. The workshop series, ‘Woman, Writing Changes Your Life’, was coordinated by the feminist poet Elena de Hoyos, and had already been underway for more than a year. Between ten and twelve inmates were participating, all of whom were interested in learning to write in a literary manner. The majority of the participants were women prisoners with some prior schooling, ranging from having finished primary school to those with technical studies. None of the women were indigenous. After I introduced myself and explained my motivation for getting to know and write the life histories of indigenous women prisoners, the women proposed that I should teach them the methodology for producing life stories so that they themselves could interview their fellow indigenous prisoners in order to write down their life stories.

Thus began a space for dialogue and collective construction of knowledge which has presented me with new academic and activist challenges. What started as a writing workshop subsequently became the Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra [Women Prisoner’s Editorial Collective Sisters in the Shadows]. This collective has already published 17 books, as well as numerous articles for cultural and prison magazines. The denunciations and stories contained in these works have been influential in

getting sentences overturned or commuted and also in securing the release of many women who had been unjustly incarcerated. The stated goal of the Life Stories Workshop [Taller de Historias de Vida] was to ‘train participants in the technique of producing life stories, both as a literary resource and as tool for reflecting on gender inequalities’. Ten women participated as writers in this workshop, and ten bilingual indigenous women shared their life stories.

The women were all inmates at the Atlacholoaya Women’s Social Correction Centre. The workshop series ran weekly between October 2008 and August 2009, after which time another workshop series was developed, this time on Writing and Artisanal Books. Within the framework of these workshop series, each participant took on the project of producing a life story of one indigenous women prisoner. The indigenous women attended the workshop once a month, in order to learn how the work was progressing and to offer their comments and questions regarding the way in which their lives were being systematized and represented by the workshop participants.

This collective process allowed indigenous and non-indigenous women to create new bonds of solidarity with one another, thus opening a space for reflecting on the racism and exclusion that exists in Mexican society and which is reproduced within the prison space itself.

The majority of us have suffered beatings, abuse, and insults at the hands of servants of the law ever since we were arrested. In some cases, we have been subject to extortion that is exempt of all due process. As if by magic, somewhere along the way from the time of our prosecution to our stay in the prison, all medical reports and testimonies of these aggressions have vanished. Furthermore, there are even small references in our files that affirm that the pleas and confessions of the accused, now presumed guilty, were not given under duress. Costalazos² may not leave any marks behind, but they do nonetheless destroy their victim’s skin, as happened to me. (Excerpt from ‘Los Costalazos’ by Águila del Mar, in *Mareas Cautivas*, Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra 2013, 32)

Such experiences stand in contrast with forms of community justice which prioritize reconciliation over punishment and re-education over isolation, as witnessed by the research team in various indigenous regions throughout the country (Cerda García 2012; Hernández Castillo 2004; Martínez and Silva Florentino 2012; Mejía 2008; Sierra 2012; Terven 2012; Villa Hernández 2012). Sharing these experiences within the context of our workshop and questioning the twin concepts of ‘backwardness and progress’ which tend to define the contrast between the lives of indigenous women and those of urban Mestiza women, we went beyond thinking in ‘monocultural linear time’.

2 Translator’s note: Costalazos are a form of torture in which a person’s body is wrapped in gunny sacks before being beaten so as to avoid leaving marks.

Contrasting their life stories led the women to realize that sexual and domestic violence take different forms. These problems may be privatized in urban spaces, but this does not make them disappear. Reflecting on their own stories and capturing them in a collective text enabled the women not only to denounce the racism, sexism and classism of the prison system but also to construct new subjectivities around the denaturalization of violence. In these collective reflection spaces which had been created for reading the life stories, the participants became aware of the need to strengthen themselves internally in order to confront these structures of domination. Above all, they were obliged to do this so as to, once out of prison, teach their children how to avoid reproducing the forms of relations which they themselves had lived. In an exercise that took place within the context of the workshop series, the participants wrote letters to women who had been physically and psychologically abused:

May you smash the chain of submissiveness resulting from your lack of self-esteem. Get to know yourself and reflect on your environment. We should no longer live the way our mothers lived, we must form our own way of thinking and communicating with our partners, and avoid reliving the way our families lived in the past. We must have our own way of living, and know how to express our feelings and teach our children, both daughters and sons alike, to express their own feelings, including to their partners and others closest to them. We must teach them to say no to violence. (Guadalupe Salgado, in the Life Stories Workshop, Atlacholoaya Women's Social Correction Centre, 17 May 2009)

Woman, if you would only dare to break your silence, maybe you could end the pattern of violence which engulfs you and which perhaps you are even reproducing yourself. It is understandable that if we live in a violent home, sooner or later we end up reproducing that very same violence . . . but, today I invite you to rebel against all that shames you and crushes your dignity. Listen, you are invaluable. Enough of the silence. Shout out loud and fight for your rights. You are, after all, a woman. (Susuki Lee, in the Life Stories Workshop, Atlacholoaya Women's Social Correction Centre, 17 May 2009)

My experience with the inmates at Atlacholoaya is not unique. Many academics have used literary workshops as an entry into the prison space. Various analysts have drawn attention to the ways in which ‘instructors’ can become complicit with the prison authorities, as workshops respond to the prison system’s needs for control and domestication (Bruchac 1987; Olguin 2009). A literary workshop can respond to the inmates’ cultural context in different ways, either enabling or preventing critical reflection among the inmates. This is what determines whether the workshop plays a hegemonic role or a counter-hegemonic one.

With these concerns in mind, my intention in running the Life Stories Workshop was to facilitate intercultural dialogues between indigenous and

non-indigenous women and to promote critical reflection about how being enchainied by inequalities related to ethnicity, gender and class had made their imprisonment possible. The participants integrated their own theorizations and reflections into the biographical narratives. In this way, the biographical narratives acquired hybrid and novel forms, going way beyond simple life stories (Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). The participants set up a column in the Gaceta Mensual *¿Y Ahora Qué?*. This was published in the prison itself, from 2008 to 2009, with the goal of socializing their knowledge. In an article about the workshop, one of the inmates highlighted its importance for building bridges between diverse women within the prison:

I believe the Life Stories Workshop is important. For me it opened a door onto an unknown world, a world which one must grapple with if we are to eradicate the inequalities which people experience in this country. On another level, the workshop is a means of sensitizing hearts and fostering sisterhood among women from different social classes. The small space where I live in the women's section of the prison is inhabited by women with different minds, customs and convictions. It is interesting to take up the challenge of uniting our voices and recording our life stories, to liberate the stories that are pent up in this prison, and to ensure that the outside world knows and reflects on the reality that we are living here. At a personal level, it allows me to gain a new experience in the world of writing and to feel proud of supporting those women who have remained silent for so long. With my writing I become a spokeswoman for those of us who are brave enough to tell these women's stories. (Gaceta Mensual *¿Y Ahora Qué?*, Year 1 No. 8: p. 3)

In this context, intercultural dialogues take place between not only the researcher and the inmates but also the inmates themselves. Their life paths are extremely varied, and the dialogues allow them to contrast the differing ways in which they experience gender inequalities and state justice. A central part of these workshops has been to reflect on these similarities and differences of experience.

In personal terms, I feel that this workshop helps me to get to know my comrades better, to know each of their ideas. It teaches us to express ourselves better and I hope that it also helps us to become sisters. I believe that through this work I am becoming a better person, more able to express my thoughts and feelings and to become more sensitive to my fellow prisoners. For those indigenous women prisoners who do not know how to read and write, our work serves as a way of getting to know their history. Along the way, we also get to know our own history. It serves as a form of mutual support. (Gaceta Mensual *¿Y Ahora Qué?*, Año 1 No. 8: p. 3)

By 2012, four years since this collective project began in 2008, four indigenous women who previously could not read had learnt to do so. They are

now writing poetry and short stories, participating as co-authors in the book *Mareas Cautivas* [Captive Tides]:

From different places,
In different languages,
All most beautiful.
All spiritually free.
Meanwhile, society tells us,
The Women prisoners,
Forgotten
Bad women, Scum.
We are creative women,
Women warriors.
Roses behind bars.
Watered with our own tears,
Nourished with our very own pain.
Prisoners guided by great hope,
Captives loved by the Lord.
Haunted women.
Victims of circumstance.
Women warriors,
in struggle.

(‘De Diferentes Lugares’,
by Leo Zavaleta
in *Mareas Cautivas*,
Colectiva Editorial de
Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas
en la Sombra 2012)

Seven of the prisoners have been released due to the commuting of their sentences. Of these, four continue participating and writing in a literary workshop outside of prison, coordinated by the author Elena de Hoyos. Those who remain incarcerated have continued to build their group identity as the Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra. This has become a reference point for all the inmates, promoting new forms of relating to each other in a more sisterly way and using writing to question the racism and sexism of the penitentiary system. Within the confines of the prison, referred to by Michel Foucault as a ‘total institution’ which constructs subordinate identities (Foucault 1986), Atlacholoaya’s women prisoners have used writings and public readings to successfully destabilize the discourse of power and denaturalize the inequalities faced by the prisoners. The creative ways in which these diverse women have used poetry, essays and short stories to theorize about gender violence, prison racism and solidarity have made me rethink the way in which I understand feminist theorizations. Consequently, I have broadened the university curricula that I teach to include these dissident

voices in my gender theory courses. A fundamental step towards decolonizing our feminisms is to break down the constraining academic boundaries through bringing ourselves closer to these theoretical approaches which arise directly from the experiences and resistances of multiple oppressions.

Third Dialogue: The struggle against sexual violence as an anti-colonial strategy of indigenous peoples in Guerrero's Costa-Montaña

The third dialogue that I want to discuss in this text began in March 2009. I was invited by the Human Rights Centre [Centro de Derechos Humanos] in Montaña de Guerrero, Tlachinollan, together with the Centre for Justice and International Law [Centro por la Justicia y el Derecho Internacional (CEJIL)] to present an anthropological Expert Witness Report before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (ICHR) [Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos COIDH]. The case involved two Me'phaa indigenous women who had brought charges of rape against soldiers from the Mexican Army. Valentina Rosendo Cantú and Inés Fernández Ortega, both members of Me'phaa Indigenous Peoples' Organization (OPIM), were raped by soldiers in February and March 2002, respectively.

I have learnt a lot from my dialogues with Inés and Valentina, both from their courage to confront and denounce state violence and also from their deep analysis. Rather than understanding their experiences of violence as individual experiences, they conceive them as part of a collective history marked by a continuum of violence towards indigenous peoples. This analytical perspective has shaped the charges they have made and their demands for community reparations, a central element of which included the demand to demilitarize the region. The way in which they have laid out their charges, testimonies and discourses throughout these ten years of struggle, and also the nature of the reparations they have demanded before the ICHR, stems from the cultural construction of a sense of personhood in which the individual and the collective constitute one another. An experience as seemingly so individualized as rape was, in fact, lived and analysed as just one moment in a wider ongoing history of violence against indigenous women and the indigenous peoples which they are a part of. The political clarity with which both Inés and Valentina have analysed and denounced their rapes made me (with my ethnocentric prejudices) question momentarily whether the documents which I read containing their charges and testimonies had in fact been faithfully translated from Me'phaa to Spanish. When I was invited to give expert testimony before the ICHR, I had not yet met Inés and Valentina personally. I was worried that the political interests of their organization or of the human rights organizations that represented them were being placed ahead of Inés and Valentina's personal interests and that the trial would result in re-victimizing them all over again.

Undoubtedly, feminist organizations often positively evaluate the impact which denouncing gender violence before international legal bodies has on gender jurisprudence and public policies. However, very little is known about the concrete effects that participating in such international trials has had on the actual women who have dared to confront state powers and take their charges outside of the country in which they live. It was this concern that led me to have doubts when I was invited to participate as an expert in Inés and Valentina's cases. I was unsure whether these two women actually wanted to press charges before this international tribunal, or whether they were under pressure from the human rights organizations which supported their fight in what was seen as a 'strategic litigation case'. With these questions in mind, I arrived in Barranca Tequani, a Me'phaa community of some 500 people in the municipality of Ayutla de los Libres, Guerrero, for the first time in March 2009. On arrival, I met Inés Fernández Ortega, a small woman whose penetrating gaze and inner strength you can feel from the very moment she looks you in the eyes. All my doubts were dispelled when she told me:

I am the one who wants to press charges, so that justice is done and that the gauchos (soldiers) know that they cannot get away with rape. I want to press charges so that my daughters and the other daughters in the community do not have to go through what I have been through. I want to press charges so that, as women in the region, we can wander in the mountains without fear. (Interview with Inés Fernández, translated by Andrea Eugenio, Barranca Tequani, 13 March 2009)

Her conviction that it was necessary to press charges not only for herself but also for all Me'phaa women led me to agree to doing the Expert Report. With this decision I began a long journey which took me to Lima, Peru, where on 15 April 2010 I participated in a public hearing convened by the Inter-American Court in order to present the report before the judges, as part of the documentary evidence presented by Inés Fernández's legal representatives. Together with the ethnologist Héctor Ortiz Elizondo, I had prepared this report over the preceding months. Among other things, the Expert Witness Report sought to demonstrate that, in addition to impacting her and her family, the sexual violence suffered by Inés also impacted on the other women from her community and also on the Me'phaa Indigenous Peoples' Organization (OPIM). During the hearings, I became close to Inés and, subsequently, also to Valentina and the other women from OPIM. In addition to learning from these women's courage, I have also learnt from their sense of collective solidarity and community cohesion.

I now realize that this type of Expert Witness Report was necessary, because not only the lawyers requested it but also Inés herself had done so. Right from the start of this process she insisted that her rape was part of a wider series of aggressions against her people and her organization. As

such, it could not be treated as an isolated case. Her stance forced the judges to justify before the court why community reparations were being demanded in response to a case of individual rape. This was a legal strategy which had not been used before in front of this international legal institution, and was a result of Inés Fernández's resolute decision to use the court as a space in which to denounce a whole chain of violent acts of which her rape was just one link. As such, it was this need to produce an expert anthropological report which gave me the privilege of getting to know these women.

Over a ten-year period, Inés and Valentina have traversed the roads of Costa Chica and the mountains of Guerrero in pursuit of justice, confronting racism and misogyny from public officials along the way. During this terrible ordeal, both women faced death threats, criticism from their communities and family tensions. Valentina's husband left her and Inés' brother Lorenzo was tortured and murdered by persons 'unknown'. He had been the bulwark of Inés' support throughout the trial.

For Inés, embarking in pursuit of justice meant frequently leaving her children in the care of Nohemí, her eldest daughter. Nohemí was barely pre-adolescent herself and had to overcome her own fears as she assumed the family responsibilities while her parents were away travelling to places such the city of Ayutla de los Libres, Tlapa, Chilpancingo or Washington. Valentina, on the other hand, was forced to flee Barranca Bejuco after receiving several death threats from paramilitary groups linked to the army. This meant leaving her home, her family and her milpa behind. Through the process of struggling for justice, both women built up solidarity networks and found allies who accompanied them throughout the eight years. This included, among others, members of Tlachinollan, of CEJIL, Peace Brigades and the Amnesty International team in Mexico. Together with some of these allies they travelled abroad, presenting their cases to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, and finally bringing them to the Inter-American Court in 2010.

The region's cultural identities and history left their mark on the specific way in which the two women experienced being raped, as well as on their subsequent search for justice. Both Valentina and Inés alike have begun to organize in terms of their own rights and also the rights of their peoples. They and their families interpreted and experienced their rapes in the light of a historic memory which links the army's presence in the region to the violence and impunity suffered since the 1970s due to the so-called 'dirty war'. To this history, they add the more recent memories of the El Charco massacre in 1998. This massacre occurred in the very same municipality of Ayutla de los Libres in which OPIM's central offices are located. Taken in this recent historical context, the rapes and sexual torture were experienced as part of a continuum of violence which has long defined the relations between the region's indigenous peoples and the Mexican armed forces.

The murder, in February 2008, of Inés' brother, Lorenzo Fernández Ortega (also a member of OPIM), together with the anonymous death threat sent to OPIM's president, Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, as well as the arrest warrants and detentions of five of OPIM's main leaders in April of the same year, have all stirred up memories of violence and impunity in the recent past. This has fostered fear and a sense of vulnerability in OPIM's members and others who live in the region. The Expert Witness Report showed us that the sexual violence was lived in such a way as to affect the whole community. For the Me'phaa people, the individual and the collective are closely interconnected. This means that the experience of violence suffered by any one individual is suffered as an affront to the community in its entirety, knocking the collective stability off kilter. This disequilibrium even finds expression at the nosological level, meaning that the painful events give rise to a sickness known locally as 'gamítú' or 'susto'. This ailment, which has physical symptoms, has affected several of the women close to Inés. From their perspective, equilibrium in the community can only be restored once justice has been attained and measures are put in place as guarantees of non-repetition. In this respect, one of the women interviewed told me: 'Without justice, our spirits are not calm. We are fearful and cannot sleep in peace. We know that if the "gauchos" are not punished for their acts they can do it again. The lack of justice gives rise to "gamítú" (susto)' (Interview with María Sierra Librada, Barranca Tequani, 15 March 2009). This community sentiment is reflected in the fact that the bulk of the reparations for damage which Inés and Valentina demanded in court was not limited to measures which would benefit them personally. Their demands also included reparations for the children and women from their organization and community. Their testimonies and actions suggest their experiences were not lived only as personal affronts. For this reason, the justice they demand is not limited to putting their aggressors behind bars but also includes the demilitarization of their regions, a stop to impunity and legislative reforms which permit women in general, and indigenous women in particular, genuine access to justice.

Over the course of the ten years which have passed since Inés and Valentina were raped, their lives have gone down diverging paths. Valentina chose to leave her community and OPIM. She took this decision after being left by her husband Fidel, who succumbed to pressure from the community and accused his wife of being a 'gaucho girl' who dared to 'shout her disgrace to the four winds'. No longer having the support of a husband, she felt vulnerable in a community that has ostracized her ever since Acatepec's municipal president threatened to withdraw funding from public works if the community continued to support Valentina's pressing of charges. In her new urban life, Valentina has learnt Spanish and has braved crossing the Atlantic to carry on her denunciations in Europe. This includes denouncing not only her rape but

also the military violence directed against organized indigenous peoples as part of Mexico's counterinsurgency strategy. Her activism has brought her into contact with various women's networks that struggle against violence and her voice has become the voice of tens of indigenous women who still lack the courage to themselves denounce the impact which militarization is having on their lives.

Inés, on the other hand, has chosen to remain in Barranca Tequani, despite part of the community having criticized and ostracized her, just as happened to Valentina. Her testimony recalls how her community initially organized to expel the soldiers from the communal lands where they had been camped out. However, over time this social cohesion broke down, due to disagreements as to the best strategy to use in the face of the threat posed by the army. In one interview, Inés recalled: 'Before we were raped the community was united. However, the government and people's fear subsequently divided us. Alfonso Morales, who worked for the army, told the women that they should not accuse the gauchos as this would bring problems. They became afraid that they would also suffer what had happened to me. After this, they no longer wanted to support me, nor to organize' (Interview with Inés Fernández, translated by Andrea Eugenio, 13 March 2009).

However, those people who remained in favour of demanding justice for Inés were able to use the collective space of OPIM in order to rebuild community bonds of solidarity. Through OPIM Inez found the support that some of her comrades from Barranca Tequani had denied her. 'OPIM has become my family and my community. Its members have suffered alongside me from the injustice committed, and are like my father and mother to me' (Interview with Inés Fernández, 2009). Together with other women from OPIM, Inés has been able to reassume her local leadership position, and they have begun to discuss the terms for implementing the sentence. On 30 and 31 August 2010, the ICHR passed down sentences against the Mexican state in the cases of Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantú. The verdict finally recognized the legitimacy of Inés and Valentina's claims and that the Mexican state was guilty of using 'institutional military violence against the physical safety of person of the victims'. After so many years of waiting, this in itself was a refreshing verdict. The actual sentences and the 'Public Admission of Guilt by the Mexican State' ['Actos de Reconocimiento de Responsabilidades del Estado Mexicano'] took place in December 2011 for Valentina's case, and in March 2012 for Inés' case. This represented a political and moral triumph for the two indigenous leaders, affirming that they were on the correct side of history and that their charges, which had so often been distorted by both civilian and military legal actors, were in fact true.

Valentina, an adolescent premature mother who only spoke Me'phaa when her life was thrown off course by two soldiers on 16 February 2002, managed

to get one of the most powerful political men in the Mexican government to lower his head and admit before his family, his friends and thousands of television viewers and radio listeners that the Mexican state was indeed guilty of violating her rights. On 15 December 2011, in Mexico City's Museum of Memory and Tolerance [Museo Memoria y Tolerancia], before a now battle-hardened Valentina and her own pre-adolescent daughter Jenny (who has inherited her mother's strength and courage), the secretary of the interior, Alejandro Poiré Romero, asked for apologies:

The Mexican state takes the opportunity of this public act to recognize its responsibility for violating Ms Rosendo Cantú's internationally recognized rights. This includes her right to personal safety of the body, dignity and a private life; her right to legal guarantees and judicial protection, and her right to guaranteed access to the judicial process without discrimination. The Mexican state has also violated the rights of girls, as enshrined in the American Convention on Human Rights, the Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture, and in the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishing and Eradication of Violence Against Women. All of these violations of rights were to the detriment of Ms. Valentina Rosendo Cantú. With the power conferred on me in this event, as Secretary of the Interior, I recognize the state's responsibility, and I hereby extend my sincere apology to you, Ms Valentina Rosendo Cantú, and to your daughter, for the events which occurred nearly one decade ago, and which were a grave violation of your rights. (Speech by the Secretary of the Interior Alejandro Poire in the Acto de Reconocimiento de Responsabilidades del Estado Mexicano para el caso de Valentina Rosendo Cantú, 15 December 2011, Mexico City.)

This speech was translated simultaneously into Me'phaa for Valentina's mother, who was seated at her side, and for her relatives who were also present in the auditorium. Many of us were moved to tears as we listened, not only by the strength and dignity which this exemplary woman radiated but also because we knew the extraordinarily high price which she had had to pay for this symbolic apology.

Three months later, on 6 March 2012, Inés Fernández received a similar apology from the Secretary of the Interior. However, this time the setting and political climate was totally different from the earlier event. Unlike in Valentina's case, Inés refused to travel to Mexico City to receive the apology. Instead, she insisted that the Public Admission of Guilt by the Mexican State should take place in the Ayutla, the principal town of the municipality of Ayutla de los Libres and that a special invitation should be extended to comrades from various organizations in the region, both male and female alike. Nearly six years after the court finally issued these verdicts, the state has incarcerated four army men responsible for the rapes of Inés Fenández and Valentina Rosendo Cantú. In October of 2013, a civil tribunal initiated proceedings against four soldiers. These men are accused with crimes of rape,

torture and abuse of authority. As of the time of writing, September 2017, the accused remain in prison, but have still not been sentenced. Some financial compensation related to Inés and Valentina's expenditures has also been granted, though also only partially and also in a belated fashion.

Nonetheless, Inés has taught all of us who have accompanied the process, including the lawyers and judges from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, a great deal. The case has set a precedent in the way in which we understand sexual violence, highlighting sexual violence as a violation of not only sexual and reproductive rights but also the collective rights of indigenous people, both women and also men, to self-determination and autonomy. Inés Fernández's concern to include all the women from her organization as beneficiaries of the court's sentence set a precedent in international law. It was the first time that that an act affecting an individual (in this case the rape of Inés) was recognized as also having affected an entire community. The case was unprecedented in the way in which the cultural context of a victim of gender violence was taken into account in order to understand how the violence was experienced and how justice should be imagined.

Inés and Valentina's voices have been amplified as other women in their organization have spoken about their experiences in Washington, Spain, Cuetzalan, Puebla, at the Community Police of Guerrero, in Tlaxcala, as well as in various fora in Mexico City. In this way, they have decried the use of sexual violence as a form of torture and the impact that militarization is having in the Montaña and Costa Chica areas of Guerrero.

Just as Inés and Valentina have done, these women have raised their voices in order to not only denounce the experience of personal violence but also to demand justice for all those whose lives are affected by militarization and violence at the hands of state security forces – women and men, boys and girls, young people and old people alike.

CONCLUSION

My goal in retelling the lessons which I have gleaned from these three intercultural dialogues, all of which have shaped me both theoretically and politically, has been to share experiences and reflections which remind us of the existence of other ways of imagining the world and constructing emancipatory strategies. It may appear somewhat banal to say that the cultural and social context determines the way in which we construct our sense of 'personhood' and the way in which we imagine a dignified life. Nonetheless, it must be stated clearly that monocultural Western knowledge has universalized one particular local knowledge based in a liberal and neoliberal individualism, giving rise to a linear conception of time in which 'progress' is determined by specific forms of consumption as defined by capital.

These voices arising from the margins, from those very spaces erased by the strategies of silencing, are starting to destabilize our certainties. They call into question our perspectives of progress and well-being which have been universalized together with those conceptions of liberal rights which nourish many contemporary democratic struggles. ‘Committed intellectuals’ or ‘feminist activists’ have relied on these certainties to ‘raise consciousness’ in order to show women the roads to, and strategies for, confronting domination. Now, in the face of voices questioning the utopia of progress (in both its left and right wing forms), these certainties are crumbling.

Behind these voices lie other epistemologies whose starting premise for understanding personhood is that it is not possible to separate the individual from the collective. Nature is understood not as resource at the service of human beings but rather as part of the cuatriedad, a totality of which humans are just a small part. Needless to say, these voices are highly contradictory and also reproduce discourses of power relating to ‘the need to be feminine’, or in some cases also naturalize racial hierarchies. While it is not my intention to idealize these other epistemologies, I nonetheless do want to show that other spaces exist for thinking about the world and for theorizing its transformation.

Constructing political alliances between diverse men and women requires developing dialogues that break with the logic of erasing other knowledge forms and that also denaturalize gender, class and race hierarchies. In this sense, I am inspired by Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s concept of an ecology of knowledge, not so much as an alternative to Western knowledge forms which end up subalternizing ‘other knowledge forms’ but rather as a new more equitable form of relation between Western knowledge and other forms of knowledge (De Sousa Santos 2009). In our case, we do not suggest that an ecology of feminist knowledge should cast aside all knowledge accumulated by Western feminism, but rather should be aware that this knowledge on its own is not able to explain everything. As such, feminist knowledge must be open to other epistemologies and ways of understanding the world, contextualizing its own origins and its space of enunciation while at the same time destabilizing its hierarchical relation to emancipatory knowledges from indigenous, Muslim and peasant women. I hope that this chapter may, in its own small way, contribute to the emergence of such an ecology of feminist knowledge, as I consider this a necessary step along the way to constructing a more just world.

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Chapter 4

Intermezzo I – Knowledge Orders

Gurminder K. Bhambra, Julia Suárez-Krabbe,
Robbie Shilliam, Manuela Boatcă, Olivia U.
Rutazibwa, Peo Hansen and Mariam Popal

Gurminder K Bhambra: Postcolonial and decolonial critiques have been one of the most fundamental critiques to come out in recent times and they don't come out of nothing. They build on longer intellectual histories and practices. What they enable us to do is to think about the necessity to deconstruct what is presented as European social science. This is particularly so, given the extent to which concepts are often given a parochial history while they are claimed to be universal. What postcolonial critique and decoloniality have enabled us to do is point to the more global and interconnected histories that have actually been central to the emergence of these concepts. The most important aspect of decolonizing the social sciences is seeking to reconstruct those concepts on the basis of engaging with these broader histories.

It would require a fundamental reconstruction of the discipline. The modern world is constructed, over the past 500 years at the very least, through processes of dispossession, of appropriation, of enslavement, of extraction, and these processes are central to the ways in which societies have thought about themselves. When we talk about concepts, that history is completely divorced from those concepts. So for me, the importance around decolonizing the social sciences is really to bring that history back into the discipline and then to ask what difference does it make if we take this history seriously. That isn't only an additive process, so it is not just about adding new histories or adding new voices, but rather asking the question: How does adding these voices change what we thought we had already known about this topic?

Julia Suárez-Krabbe: The social sciences are part of the master's tools. They are complicit in the construction of the master's tools, of legitimizing colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy. They were constructed by a very limited number of people. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos says, if you think of who is represented in the social sciences, in the canon, who the founding figures

of the social sciences are, you get the idea, that these are people – men – from five different countries in the global North. So if you think through what is taught in the universities and what is taught in the social sciences, it is basically the reading and the analysis of society based on the social experience of a very limited number of people that is transposed to the rest of the world. And of course it is very gendered and very racist and colonial, without that being part of what is taught about. So that is kind of the intrinsic part of the social sciences: that they themselves are part of the master's house. Or, they are the masters house as well. To me it means that research is important, thinking is important, thinking through and analysing the problems that we face is very important; but that we need to do so in a way that does not replicate the logic of the master's house.

If you look at a textbook that is intended to teach theory of science – I teach theory of science at Roskilde University – and you see the books that are compiled to introduce the students to the theory of science, you have the representation of many different ways of thinking and asking questions, but from within this limited room. It is still very limited, however much pretending to be universal. In a way you can ask the same questions, but from a different social, economic, historical experience. In doing so, it becomes very different, and even become revolutionary or decolonial in itself. For example, African existentialism asks similar questions that European existentialism would ask, but the answers are very different. Or the elaborations and analyses that lead to finding these answers are very different. What is a human being, what does it mean to be human? That question can be the same for Kierkegaard and for Lewis Gordon, but the content of the answers is very different: What does it mean to be a human being if you have been dehumanized historically? It is a very different question if you have been enslaved and dehumanized as a subject of anti-black racism from than if you are a Danish, white guy who can actually have the privilege of thinking because his father earns a lot of money from the colonies. That is a very different social, historical and economic experience. It makes a difference to think through diversity from different positions. It opens up a lot of the knowledge.

Robbie Shilliam: I'll make a distinction between the master's tools and the master's house. Because the master's house is what is built with the master's tools, but the tools aren't necessarily the master's. The masters might have taken them and used them to build a house. So I think the house has to be demolished, but we can't throw away the tools which did it. Because in actual fact: those tools are everybody's. And I'm saying that because a lot of people when they ask this question about decolonizing the academy, decolonizing the social sciences, they imagine that what you must get rid of is reason, rationality, cause and effect, evidence, demonstration, proof – and that's where it becomes quite a romantic project. If we want to decolonize the social sciences

and the academy and then say let's go, sit on a hill, and do something quite differently: I think that's an abrogation of responsibility. In other words, what I'm saying is: Things that we imagine to be in a master – reason, rationality, cause and effect – all those kind of things are not the master's. They were never the master's. What they were always part of was different cosmologies, different thought systems, different modes of being and thinking. And I'm saying that because any alternative has to be practical. And the things that we teach and that we learn in the social sciences are supposed to be eminently practical for the modern world. They're not just practical for the masters. The alternative is not impracticality. So I think this is a really important thing to talk about, because otherwise we get romantic. When you work with many movements, you know, a lot of movements are very practical and they use these tools. But they use them in a different constellation of values and practices. That's the true pluralization, democratization of the academy. It's getting rid of the house, building many houses, but it's not getting rid of the tools. It's just making all these tools interact with all these other tools rather than saying that they are only used for building a master's house. It was never the master who built the master's house anyway. It was just stolen!

Manuela Boată: It's always important to have a plurality of perspectives and approaches in general, not only in the social sciences. But I think as far as the Western European methodology in the social sciences is concerned, it's more than just about plurality for plurality's sake. It's more about revealing Western European methodology as a crippling methodology. It's one that limits the scope of global and historical analysis, it's one that limits the data of analysis as such to nationally bounded units, it's one that delegitimizes structural critique as too Marxist, it's one that condemns concerns with epistemology as non-scientific or as lack of objectivity. So in this sense coming beyond this crippling methodology is liberating.

I believe that the best thing that comes out of a decolonial and postcolonial methodology is seeing connections in history. Connections become clearer once we have a global and historical perspective that lets us see, for instance, in the current discussions on migrations and refugees that 12 per cent of the European population in the nineteenth century emigrated out of Europe to all of the colonial possessions. That is over 15 million people. That is a number that normally is not talked about in the context of European social history. So what does that mean for a reverse migration today which is not even conceived as reverse migration? The connections between colonial economies and industrialization in Europe is something that has been written about in the 1950s but also something that has been delegitimized as being too Marxist in approach to actually make a valid point. A lot of European thought that has been critiqued for one or another reason has not been completely thrown out the window because of critique. But when it comes to critiques of colonialism

and imperialism it is enough to say: When there is one point of critique about them, then we don't need to engage with them at all. Well maybe there is some critical thinking to be salvaged from it. A global historical perspective with a structural critique is what actually is the core of postcolonial and decolonial approaches for me. I know it's not everyone's idea of a postcolonial critique, but I think a combination of structural and global historical approach is what it takes.

Olivia U Rutazibwa: One of the things that is useful to me is to try to think through the idea that one of the most important things about decoloniality is that we do not go and look for an absolute truth or an absolute method or an absolute framework. So decoloniality is not a new grand theory. It is called a decolonial option by people like Mignolo and Vázquez, or, like we said before, a lens through which we look at elements of reality and how we want to change it. That does not mean that we do not have to try to answer that question, because otherwise it is just something vague. The way I try to do that through my work is to think about it as a strategy – decoloniality as different strategies that you can employ to guide you in whatever research you are doing. And I guess I simply find a lot of the things that I read left and right from the decoloniality schools are first something that has to do with how we look at the world or understand the worlds. One of the first decolonial imperatives is that there is a lot that needs to be demythologized. There are so many myths, especially in international relations, about the origin of wealth and the origin of poverty or conflict and all these things. A lot of our theories are based on exactly such fictions and reproduce them in that sense. One of the first things that need to come to mind when we choose a topic is: What are the myths that have been perpetuated within that particular topic and how can we try to dismantle that? Often that comes down to reconnecting stories that have been disconnected. Also move away from Eurocentricism and question where we start the story. Second, I would say that there is the imperative to de-silence. That is more about who produces the knowledge, who do we see as experts or not, who do we criminalize, who do we never even look at, who do we overexpose to then not say anything about them substantially. For instance, the Muslim in Europe today: We cannot say that it is an invisible figure, but it is being silenced by the simplistic ways in which certain images are being repeated. The third one, and I think that is the biggest challenge when it comes to decoloniality, is this normative imperative to be anti-colonial, so to decolonize really. That should be the guiding principle in whatever choices we make, of the stories that we want to tell. But also how we go about it. This not just about trying to claim a space for silenced peoples and stories in an existing reality, but to acknowledge that what you produce should be at the service of really fundamentally changing that reality. Then you come down

to the more material elements like capitalism and the influences this has had on anything to do with oppression and domination.

Peo Hansen: I focus on the blind spots a lot in my research – I do research on the European Union and on European integration. I do both contemporary and historical stuff. In the historical stuff, I emphasize very much that we need to see the context in which it started. Just as we have done with the member states of the European Union: There are a lot of studies on French imperialism, on British imperialism, on Belgium imperialism and so on. But so far we have not really taken to task the European integration project – given that it was founded in the 1950s, which was a time of rampant colonial projects, wars and also a huge struggle for decolonization. So to think that that project would stand outside colonial issues is very naïve. Yet, such naiveté constitutes the whole starting point for EU studies. Then in the contemporary field, where I do a lot of work and teaching on migration, I seek to historicize that as well. Part of the primary tools to use is to say that all of these things have histories and that's where we have to start sort of asking those questions to the present.

Mariam Popal: The question how to move beyond the master's tools is really essential. At the same time, it is very difficult – for me at least – to answer this question. I take the question as an indication that we feel there is something wrong in the social sciences, or in science or the humanities as such. I do not perceive myself as a social scientist, so I would come from another line of academic learning and teaching. What would be important for me is to take into consideration that when Audre Lorde used this metaphorical sentence, she used it in a specific context. What she was criticizing was the context of *white* feminist supremacy that uses the logic of patriarchal academic premises to do research. I think what she wanted to emphasize – by actually using the words of Simone de Beauvoir – is that it is important that we take responsibility based on the experiences of our own lives. This is the most relevant stance for me. But I do not see in her text a rejection or conservatism regarding any kind of other texts or contexts. It is rather about the question of how we can try to be really critical without falling into other dogmas or being dominant ourselves.

Part II

DECOLONIZING RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 5

Postcolonial Feminist Ethics and the Politics of Research Collaborations across North-South Divides

Johanna Leinius

SITUATING RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS

Postcolonial feminist research ethics and methodologies reveal and challenge the many ways in which academic knowledge production is shaped by unequal relations of power (see de Lima Costa 2013; Levya et al. 2015; Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Consisting of a ‘multifaceted “plurilogue”’ (Schohat 2001, 2), postcolonial feminism has challenged the silences and exclusions within academic theory, resistance movements as well as within mainstream feminism (see Lewis and Mills 2003, 3–7). It comprises a heterogeneous field stemming from different social locations and histories, encompassing the work of Black feminists (see Combahee River Collective 1981; Hill Collins 2000), Women-of-Colour feminists (see Anzaldúa and Keating 2002; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981), Chicana feminists (see Anzaldúa 1987; Blackwell 2011), Third World feminists (see Minh-ha 1987; Mohanty 2002), decolonial feminists (see Espinosa Miñoso, Gómez Correal and Ochoa 2014; Lugones 2010) and Native feminists (see Tuck and Yang 2012), among others. A central target of their critiques has been the supposed objectivity of knowledge: Postcolonial feminists posit that the scientific claim to neutrality and objectivity obscures colonial and patriarchal power relations, stabilizing the hegemony of one kind of knowledge cloaked as universal. Holding that ‘every view is a view from somewhere and every act of speaking a speaking from somewhere’ (Abu-Lughod 2008 [1991]: 53), they have striven to reveal the situatedness of all knowledge.

But not only postcolonial and feminist approaches have scrutinized processes of research and knowledge production. Their critical reflections connect to a long history of approaches that have aimed to challenge the power differentials in empirical social science research (see Harding 2008;

Maldonado-Torres 2004; Quijano and Ennis 2000; Said 1978; Santos 2004, 2007; Wallerstein 1991). Many disciplines of the social sciences and humanities have confronted the unequal distribution of power in research, displaying a growing concern with establishing horizontal dialogue and reciprocity across North-South divides (see Kaltmeier and Berkin 2012; Sabaratnam 2011).

Within these debates, a central point of contention has been whether and how research relationships between people divided by power differentials can and should be established. Taking seriously the impact of colonization and exploitation on the way knowledge about the world is created and disseminated, research relations between indigenous peoples and academic researchers (see Tuhiwai Smith 1999), different ethnicities and genders (see Burns and Walker 2005; Hill Collins 2000) and different classes (see Mellor et al. 2014) have been critically examined. In general, the organization of knowledge production between the global South and global North has come under scrutiny.¹

The different strands of critical research concerned with the way unequal power relations impact on knowledge production concur in their conviction that epistemological and methodological questions are political and need to be addressed. How to translate these concerns to the minutiae of research practice and design, however, is less clear. According to many of those participating in these debates, it should be a matter dealt with within each research project, as the configuration of research relationships depends on the people involved, their expectations, positionalities and goals.

I agree with this sentiment but would underline the importance of sharing our stories and experiences with efforts to build non-dominating ways of producing knowledge across power divides – not to offer ready-made recipes but to contribute to the creation of collective knowledges that might be useful for other cases and places. Based on the experiences gained in my research collaboration with the *Programa Democracia y Transformación Global* (PDTG),² I discuss the ambivalences of researchers located in the global North striving to engage in knowledge production with activists from

¹ The term ‘global South’ broadly refers to Latin America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. It is a geopolitical term that points to the unequal relations of power that exist between the global South and the ‘global North’ (most often equalled to the G7, the seven ‘leading’ industrial countries). It echoes terms such as ‘centre-periphery’ or First World-Third World, which – from distinct historical and political standpoints – have underlined the role of colonialism, imperialism and unequal relations of trade in the distribution of wealth, privilege and power between the world regions (see Dados and Connell 2012; Dhawan et al. 2016, 5; Dirlk 2007).

² Based in Lima, Peru, the PDTG consists of activists concerned with accompanying social movement struggles and building insurgent knowledges by creating spaces for encounter between different social movements as well as between academia and activism. Originally founded as a postgraduate program at the *Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos*, one of Peru’s largest public universities, the PDTG left the university in 2006 and constituted itself as an NGO to be closer to the social movements it accompanies. Another incentive was the possibility to apply for international funding. Recently, it has refounded itself as an autonomous collective for militant research and popular education. For more information on the PDTG, see <http://www.democraciaglobal.org/index.php>.

the global South. I ask whether meaningful research relationships can be developed under conditions of coloniality.

My research collaboration with the PDTG was concerned with scrutinizing how solidarity across difference can be established through encounters between heterogeneous social movements, taking the ‘Dialogues between Movements and Knowledges’ (*Diálogos de Saberes y Movimientos*) the PDTG has organized since 2010 as case for reflecting on the potential, but also difficulties of fostering non-colonizing alliances. Coming from a German-Finnish family background and having been involved in youth exchanges nationally and internationally since being a teenager both as participant and organizer, my academic interest in how to build solidarity across difference reflected my experiences with not only the enormous potential for critical learning but also the risks for misunderstanding and marginalization in encounters across difference. In Costa Rica, feminist friends had introduced me to the work of the modernity/coloniality/decoloniality program, which gave me a new conceptual vocabulary with which to scrutinize the connections between global power dynamics and people’s orientations and actions. In my master’s thesis, I applied this perspective in order to trace these links (see Leinius 2011). I felt, however, that my work fell short of actually getting to the heart of the matter – one of the reasons being that the methodology I applied did not allow for sustained collaboration and exchange. My dissertation research picked up the trajectory of my first steps as researcher but strove to respond to its shortcomings. It was also inspired by my activism as organizer in the German Education Union as well as my deeper engagement with feminist and postcolonial feminist work.

How this specific constellation of previous experiences, motivations and aspirations has shaped my collaboration with the PDTG is part of the following reflections, which I have structured in the following way: I first present how postcolonial feminists have challenged the continuing separations between researcher and researched and present their proposal for developing ‘transnational feminist collaborations’. I then discuss how in my research, I strove to respond to their critiques. I show how issues of not only power, authority and coloniality but also vulnerability, risk and diverging spatial and temporal logics have shaped the research collaboration. I use these experiences to discuss their implications for strengthening both emancipatory research practice and activist politics.

POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST RESEARCH ETHICS

Research ethics as a field of enquiry in the social sciences emerged when the Nuremberg Trials laid open the horrors of the forced experiments performed

on inmates of the concentration camps and, subsequently, the Enlightenment paradigm of the ‘neutral’ and ‘objective’ pursuit of knowledge could not be upheld (see Fawcett and Featherstone 2000; Lincoln and Cannella 2009, 274). Since the 1960s, and especially since the Helsinki Declaration in 1964 that institutionalized ethical practice for biomedical research, social scientists have engaged with ethics in qualitative research (see Kimmel 1988; Sjoberg 1967).

The focus of these debates, however, has usually been the individual researcher and her commitment to ‘doing the right thing’ (Israel and Hay 2006; Macfarlane 2009, 2–4; Ruane 2004, 16–29). Ethical demands conventionally concern the full disclosure of the research aims and methods to the participants of the research, confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher furthermore is tasked with ensuring that participation in the research is voluntary and does not harm the research participants. Researchers should research with integrity, disclose conflicts of interest and strive to achieve the highest quality possible (see Aldred 2008, 889; von Unger and Narimani 2012, 7). In this approach to research ethics, the responsibility for ethical decision-making during the research process lays with the researcher, who also retains the authority over the research and its results.

Feminist research ethics have been anchored in a political understanding of ethical practice deeply intertwined with feminist epistemology: Starting from lived experience and the partiality of all knowledge, feminist epistemology shows how supposedly objective knowledge perpetuates male privilege. Feminist knowledge production in general strives to contribute to struggles for social justice (Harding 1987) and, as the feminist demand is, above all, for research to be emancipatory, research participants are at the core of research: Instead of an object of research providing raw data to be converted into theory by the researcher, both the researcher and the research participants are seen to be engaged in collaborative efforts to critically reflect on their lived experience. Research is needed to trace the different social realities existing and, by linking them, creating more comprehensive knowledge useful for emancipatory struggles (Lather 1991; Stanley and Wise 1983). Writing is seen as an action that not only makes visible otherwise obscured structures of domination and oppression but also creates political consciousness (see Anzaldúa 1987; Stone-Mediatore 2003).

Feminist research has consequently aspired to ‘the unsettling of where epistemic authority lies between “researcher” and “subject”’ (Sabaratnam 2011, 801, see also Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010; Richardson 2010). It has critically engaged with not only the situatedness of all knowledge but also the ‘theoretical absence and empirical presence of the Other’ (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010, 6): By allowing researchers to become the authority about others and decide about how the knowledge produced about them is presented and disseminated, it is argued that unequal power relations are reproduced even

in emancipatory research, stabilizing the authority and privilege of the writer, who retains the power to represent. This tendency has been commented on by critical researchers from other disciplines as well: Decolonial researchers, for example, hold that methodology is one of the main avenues in which unequal power relations are perpetuated in academic research (Decoloniality Europe 2013), while the anthropologists Juan Aparicio and Mario Blaser argue that ‘modern intellectuals’ often ‘stop short of truly engaging with [Othered] knowledges on their own terms, and thus remain entrenched in [their] position of authority’ (Aparicio and Blaser 2008, 84).

To confront these issues, feminist researchers have introduced ways to address ‘the ways in which a researcher’s position in terms of gender, race, class, among other categories, shapes the content of research’ (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010, 7). Critical self-reflexivity, or the ability to question the ‘assumptions behind one’s research methods as well as the capacity to draw lessons from outside one’s world’ (see Lugones and Spelman 1983; Nicolaïdis 2015, 299), has become a means to mark that positionality. The use of multiple ‘voices’ in the text has been proposed as a way to denaturalize the researcher’s voice as sole authority of the knowledge produced (Lugones and Spelman 1983; González and Lincoln 2006). Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar furthermore underline the importance of enacting accountability, meaning the ‘sharing of interview transcripts, life histories, and finished academic products with informants/subjects’ (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010, 7).

But Lock Swarr and Nagar claim that these practices nevertheless often reproduce the hierarchization between researcher and researched. They hold that

at best, the critique that emerges through praxis gets reduced to another form of representational device or labeled as ‘participatory action research,’ and, in the process, gets bureaucratically controlled or abstracted from its embeddedness in lived struggles. . . . And we are left again with a recurring problem: academic knowledges that dominate and languages that exclude, to safeguard the closed interpretive communities that have become constantly shrinking fiefdoms forbidden to the uninitiated. (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010, 8)

The central dichotomies that hierarchically structure research practice, they claim, remain intact even in feminist research that strives to be both emancipatory and critical. The difference between the academic and the activist, between theory and practice and between individual and collective processes of knowledge production continues to structure research practice and knowledge production (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010). When embarking on research between global North and South, these divides undoubtedly are powerful in steering research practice. But how can emancipatory research be conducted under these conditions?

TRANSLATING POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST ETHICS TO RESEARCH PRACTICE

Lock Swarr and Nagar propose ‘transnational feminist collaboration’ (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010, 12) as a collective project that fosters the connections between previously unconnected social worlds, not to generate ‘new debates in narrowly defined academic circles’ (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010, 12) but to transform power relations in the sites connected by collaborative knowledge production.³ They emphasize the need to construct collaborative projects that remain open to critical scrutiny and resist the institutionalizing tendencies of both academia and activism (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010, 14). Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) has, in turn, proposed to engage in research as a dialogue incorporating reflexive solidarity through a politics of commitment. She and her colleague Jacqui M. Alexander propose to do analyses that are location-specific but not location-bound, in the sense that while they respond to local concerns and work towards transformative change in specific localities, they at the same time make visible and challenge broader structures of domination (Alexander and Mohanty 2010, 27; see Mohanty 2002, 522–23).

Both approaches underline that even the most politically committed research reproduces unequal power relations, making collaborative research not a panacea for emancipatory knowledge production but a means for working together while continuously confronting the ambivalences and failures of one’s collaborative efforts (see Mohanty 2003, 194–217; Nagar 2006).

I have translated these concerns by developing a framework for committed research, weaving together threads from activist research, postcolonial feminist research and decolonial research. Research that has to culminate in a dissertation as single-authored text within a set amount of time makes other ways of building collaborative research projects such participatory research (see von Unger and Narimani 2012) much more difficult – the term ‘committed research’ comes closest in articulating the intent of my research while acknowledging its limitations.

Striving to find practices and people that would resonate with my interest in how to build non-colonizing alliances across difference, my first scouring of the field of social movement and feminist research brought me to the World Social Forum (WSF). As the WSF has been prominent in discussions about how to inaugurate new ways of building counter-hegemonic struggles for another world, it seemed an appropriate starting point for my research.

³ Their edited volume ‘Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis’ (Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010) brings together practitioners of such collaborations that underline the complexities and challenges inherent to these projects.

Discussing my research interests with Teivo Teivainen, a professor and activist of the WSF, however, steered me into another direction: He commented that he had close ties to a Peruvian activist collective – the PDTG – that shares my interest in how to build solidarity across difference and offered to facilitate contact. As the PDTG was interested in my research and in getting to know me, I decided to conduct an exploratory fieldwork phase split between spending time in Peru and attending the WSF in Tunisia. Afterwards, I decided that my research could be pursued much better with the PDTG than at the WSF as not only our analytical but also epistemological and political questions seemed to coincide: Parallel to accompanying social movement struggles and organizing encounters, the PDTG acts as publishing house, editing and publishing critical research from Peru and elsewhere. Their political project is concerned with constructing and disseminating knowledge from and for social movement struggles. Their desire to probe the relation between emancipatory activist praxis and academic theory and to critically reflect on the possibilities of collaborating across difference coincided with the questions I grappled with. Through a more committed research collaboration with the PDTG, I also hoped that the research results would be more meaningful for not only me but also the social movement actors involved.

Including an exploratory phase of research – possible only because I received a grant from a German institution supporting international academic exchange – meant that I could learn from the actors themselves how they considered my research interest most fruitfully pursued in the social field they know best: their own activism. Jeffrey Juris (2008, 271), in this context, argues that ‘contemporary social movements are uniquely self-reflexive’. Not taking seriously this characteristic would not only have been condescending to the extreme and reproduce power hierarchies between academia and activism but would also have resulted in the loss of relevant knowledge and theory simply due to the researcher’s arrogance.

My commitment to seeing our research as shared task was not taken as factual, but repeatedly scrutinized critically: Only after having collaborated for over a year and come back to Peru a second time, our research collaboration was made explicit and I was invited to participate in the social movement encounters I was interested in, due to the very understandable desire to protect their activism and the social movements they work with from extractive researchers who collect information and then leave to never return again (see Levy 2015, 203).

Even though the limits of our collaboration were clear from the beginning – one of the ‘products’ was to be a single-authored dissertation that followed the academic standards set by a scientific institution of the global North – we found a way to include collaborative elements that gave both sides tools to hold the other side accountable. We also strove to ensure that the knowledge

produced would be of relevance both for me, as researcher writing her qualifying work, and for the PDTG, which was interested in undergirding its practices theoretically.

In the following, I reflect on three aspects that, in my opinion, are essential for critically assessing our research collaboration. These issues mirror different aspects that the three research traditions that have shaped my engagement with research ethics have emphasized: The issue of how to develop a common project has been central for discussions in activist research, the matter of distance and proximity has been crucial in feminist research and the issue of ‘the privilege of the last word’, referring to the ways knowledge is presented and disseminated, has been discussed in decolonial research.

BUILDING A COMMON PROJECT

In research that aims to overcome the power differentials between researcher and research participants, it is hoped that seeing the research as part of a common (political) project can counteract the power differentials and structural inequalities in research relationships (see Otto and Terhorst 2011, 204). When the researcher becomes an activist herself, activist researchers hold, the boundaries between the researcher as outsider and the activist as insider become blurred.

Approaching research as ‘dialogue among politically situated actors’ (Hale 2006, 100), however, does not necessarily intend to break open the dichotomy between academia and activism (Hale 2006, 114). Postcolonial feminist research consequently has cautioned that the distinction between the researcher as the producer of abstract knowledge and the researched as providers of tactical knowledge is not always challenged by activist research (see Lock Swarr and Nagar 2010; Motta 2011). Every research project that aims to challenge these dichotomies by aligning itself politically with the struggle analysed must therefore carefully consider how such a common project can be developed and sustained.

But the question is not only one of negotiating what kind of research is useful for me, the PDTG as well as the others involved, and how this research is to be undertaken, but also clarifying the possible risks of collaboration. Even though a ‘common project’ is important for building collaborative research practices, sharing a common goal does not mean equality regarding one’s stakes in the process: Pursuing collaborative work meant that I had to give up some level of control over my qualification work; if the PDTG had decided to terminate our cooperation, my dissertation would have been affected. The PDTG, in turn, risked much by letting a researcher from the global North participate in the collective reflection of the Diálogos. That in Peru, the

mere presence of a foreign researcher could be used to delegitimize social movement activities became clear when, after attending a press conference by members of the anti-mining movement, a Peruvian media outlet argued that the movement was steered by foreign interests, using my presence – as apparently recognizably non-Peruvian subject by looks and speech – as proof of international donors’ backing of the anti-mining movement. In a political context that is hostile towards emancipatory political organizing, they needed to trust not only my good intentions but also my commitment to developing long-term relations of cooperation that would allow them partial control over the information published about them.

Building a common project also means agreeing on not only the aims of the research but also the epistemological foundations of how these aims are to be reached. Choosing the PDTG as counterpart in my research meant that the role of knowledge production was, from the very beginning, a central topic in our conversations. We identified common ground in our shared conviction that the knowledge produced by social movements is crucial for destabilizing the conventions of who produces knowledge about activism.

As an organization with roots in the university, the PDTG understood the limits of academic knowledge production and, since their decision to leave university, has aspired to challenge who is considered a knowledge producer. Focusing on what academia and activism in the global North can learn from knowledge practices in the global South and framing my research interest in these terms meant that I approached the PDTG not as source of empirical experience to be converted into theory but as creators of political praxis and knowledge to learn from. The PDTG, in turn, had been reflecting on how to create insurgent knowledges and was experimenting with popular education methodologies. My proposal to work together on a deeper reflection on how to build solidarity across difference thus came at an opportune time.

During my stay, I was involved in the preparation of two large encounters between different social movements that served as the empirical cases I analysed in my research. I was an active part of the methodological and practical decisions that shaped these encounters, which co-implied me in the production of the discourses and practices I analysed. Apart from analysing the *Diálogos*, which convened social movement actors, artists, and academics from Latin America, Europe and Africa, I examined the 13th Latin American and Caribbean Encounter, organized by Peruvian feminists in the context of the larger tradition of the Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounters (see Alvarez et al. 2003; Restrepo and Bustamante 2009).

My collaboration with the PDTG, however, relegated the activists involved in the second inter-movement encounter to second place: While I supported its political aims and helped in the preparation and implementation of the encounter, I neither engaged in a deeper discussion of my research aims nor

handed over decision-making power regarding the direction of my research to the organizers. Most of the members of the organizing group knew that I would conduct research on the encounter, but conversations seldom went into more detail.

This had, on the one hand, to do with the sequencing of my research: I entered the Peruvian context through the PDTG, and we agreed on the framework of the research before preparations for the Feminist Encounter began. In my interactions with the organizers of the Feminist Encounter, I was identified as member of the PDTG. This not only allowed me access but also shaped my relations to the activists based on the previous history between members of the PDTG and the activists involved in the organization of the Feminist Encounter. The preparatory process of the second encounter additionally was not very open to outsiders and I never achieved the same level of trust. Questions of distance and proximity were of central importance for how the research developed; I discuss these issues in the following section.

DISTANCE AND PROXIMITY

Keeping distance to the people one researches is seen as indispensable within hegemonic academic standards that equal validity to neutrality. In critical feminist research, partiality, positionality and accountability are seen as indispensable for ensuring that research does not reinscribe inequality through the knowledge it produces (Bhavnani 1994, 28–29).⁴

Proximity to the communities one researches with is a necessary part of the research process. Proximity, however, should not be equated with uncritical closeness: It involves the continuous critical reflection of the relationships that develop during research in terms of power, representation and oppression. This includes the questioning of why and how I as researcher felt more comfortable with certain research participants than others, tracing the entanglements of race, class, gender and other markers of identification that shaped how we relate to each other not only as interlocutors of the research but also as people.

Michelle Fine (1994), in a seminal contribution to the debate, has characterized these constant struggles as ‘Working the Hyphens’ between Self and Other. She argues that in research, the personal identities of the researcher

⁴ Most of the methodological discussions in critical feminist research concerning reflexivity and power concern empirical research with marginalized communities and emancipatory actors. When ‘studying up’ – researching the privileged and powerful – the contours of the debate shift slightly (see Lundström 2010; Sohl 2018), while the political impetus of research stays the same: contributing to social justice and emancipation.

and the research participants intermesh with collective constructions of difference. The challenge of writing social science research, then, is to reveal the knotty entanglement between Self and Other in research and to show 'how we are in relation to the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations' (Fine 1994, 72). The goal is to use these insights to challenge oppression and work for social justice with those we have developed research relations with.

Proximity, then, means not only an alignment with the political aims of those one researches with but also the abandonment of the neutral position of researcher in research practice and writing. The subjective experience of the researcher has to figure prominently in the research so that the role of the researcher in the collection and analysis of the data as well as the partiality of all knowledge claims is made explicit (see Burns and Walker 2005; Harding 2004).

Concerning my research, a large factor of how the research developed undeniably was the question of affect and its entanglement with positionality: Our common project was built on experiences of border-crossings, knowledge politics and political activism, which affected how we related to each other. Within the PDTG, I felt as part of a team of like-minded activists of whom many had a similar trajectory as I, though of course shaped by the different locations we find ourselves in. Our lived experiences resonated with each other, most of us were in the same age group and, while class background is difficult to compare across geopolitical divides, we all have spent many years within the university context and lived in urban areas. These commonalities served to bridge the undeniably existing differences in our political positioning, cultural codes and experiential background that led to some contention, and nevertheless allowed for ties of affinity and interest in the other as person.

In contrast, most activists involved in the organization of the Feminist Encounter were Peruvian middle-aged women working in feminist NGOs that were part of the urban 'white' middle class of Lima. Our relationship, though based on respect and comradeship as well, was mainly shaped by our encounter within the preparatory process of the meeting and only in some cases extended beyond these spaces. I was introduced to the organizers by a member of the PDTG and identified with this description of my role.⁵ For them, I was a volunteer from abroad, welcome to support the process but not party to the inner debates and dynamics. I could attend some of the internal meetings, but I remained an outsider-within, whose presence was accepted because of my ties to the PDTG and the trust they demonstrated in me. As

5 When introducing me to others involved in the preparatory process, the activists of the Feminist Encounter generally introduced me as German researcher working at the PDTG. I also introduced myself in this manner in the numerous introductory rounds at the various meetings and encounters.

I did not figure as a central actor in the overall process, their interest in me and my research was limited. Though I am politically aligned with their goals, my involvement did not challenge the dichotomies of research the same way my collaboration with the PDTG did.

Proximity consequently means taking seriously the entanglements in research and take them as productive sites of contention for building more equal research relationships. This means reflecting on the fact that I was, more often than not, cast as the learner in a setting that emphasized mutual learning for change. My academic knowledge and experience in political organizing were resources that at some points were useful, but that in most cases did not translate well to the intricacies of building trust between people who had experienced a violent internal conflict less than two decades ago and whose daily realities were markedly different from mine.

For me, working the hyphens has also entailed working across geographical and cultural divides: My time in Lima has always involved working as a member of the PDTG and, alongside them, learn about popular education methodologies. Becoming a facilitator of inter-movement encounters instead of merely researching them enabled me, on the one hand, to better comprehend the situatedness of the encounters I analysed. On the other hand, working with the members of the PDTG resulted in us forming friendships and building mutual trust, which extended our relationship beyond that of mere research collaborators. The closeness I achieved led me to an understanding of the dynamics at play that I would not have achieved by keeping my distance. This improved my ability to embed the experiences I made and impressions I gained during my research in the broader political and social landscape that Peruvian emancipatory social movements navigate daily.

My ability to change locations more easily than most of the members of the PDTG has structured our collaboration: Even though we continue our conversations once I am back in Germany, it is in a less intensive manner, and the choice whether and when to return to Peru and engage more intensively again with the PDTG and the political processes in Peru is mine. But the PDTG can also decide when to engage with my research project and whether to grant me access again once I am back in Peru. Before each of the four research stays that have built the foundation of our research collaboration, I asked the PDTG when they would want me to return and under what conditions our cooperation would continue. I also sent regular written summaries of how the research proceeded, the main arguments I wanted to make, the theories used and the next steps I envisioned. I did never receive written feedback to the documents I sent, but they served as foundation of our discussions once I was back in Peru. Questions of diverging practices, demands on the scarce resources available and our different priorities meant that dedicating the time

to write down detailed feedback and send it to me was not possible, making my presence in their spaces essential for the continuing of our collaboration. It was my task to pursue the project and maintain contact, as the research in question was of more importance for me than for the PDTG.

Building a common project with the PDTG did not happen without conflict. A valuable lesson I learnt in the research collaboration is that distance is a mode of protecting one's vulnerabilities, an option often not given to those involved in emancipatory struggles that draw on their experiences of oppression and violence. To illustrate this point, let me discuss a situation that made the continuing power of academic assumptions of the necessity of distance clear: After I gave a presentation on postcolonial feminism to members of the PDTG and activists from the feminist, indigenous and peasant women's and LGBTQ movements during my first stay in Peru, I was challenged by a member of the PDTG afterwards for not sharing my own experiences and emotional investments in both the theories I use and the questions I raise. She asked me why I was expecting the women present for the presentation to share their stories when I did not share mine. She urged me to give up my distanced position as researcher and articulate my own entanglements and emotional investments in these topics. This insight has influenced my own reflections and has made obvious the many ways the implicit assumptions about the role of researcher and researched are hard to shake off, especially when the risk of being hurt emotionally is present.

DISSEMINATING KNOWLEDGE

The question of how the results of research are disseminated goes to the very centre of the binary between researcher and researched. Questioning how and by whom the knowledge produced is employed and for what aims means confronting the ways in which academic knowledge production protect the authority of the researcher even in the face of methodologies that actively challenge the very logics of academic research.

Tracing systems of power from the local to the global, as Alexander and Mohanty propose, means to acknowledge that power differentials shape research practice not only 'in the field' but also in the spaces of institutionalized academia. It remains a question of critical enquiry whether and how these two locations are related to each other and how an emancipatory politics can be anchored in both. Striving to confront processes of exclusion and silencing within social movement encounters without taking into account how academic encounters are conditioned on processes of exclusion and silencing as well denies the possible interdependency of these processes that maintain colonizing binaries.

In writing, I represent the struggles I have aligned myself with; my interpretation of the context, the interaction and the people involved is decisive in creating a reality that the reader assumes as factual. Especially when writing cross-culturally and, as in my case, as a member of the dominant ‘white’ culture about difference, I inevitably misrepresent (see Schutte 2000). How I re-present not only the results of my research but also the processes that have led to these results can have effects not only for the validation of these results in academic contexts but also for my research relationships and the spaces of activism in Peru I have engaged with.

The Charter of Decolonial Research Ethics frames this issue as the ‘privilege of the last word’ (Decoloniality Europe 2013). It states that many researchers follow ‘an ethical code that requires informed consent, and people’s knowledge about the basic interest of the research. This ethical code is, however, suspended as soon as the information has been gathered’ (Decoloniality Europe 2013). Writing about other lives and other contexts in a setting that is structured by colonial logics that hierarchically order and dichotomize difference necessitates more than the well-intentioned desire not to do harm. It means continuing to be accountable for what I write after the material has been gathered. It also goes further than ‘giving back’ research results in a format that responds to academic logics but might be unintelligible and irrelevant in other contexts.

Decolonial researchers propose to install a peer-review process with the social movements one undertakes research with (see Decoloniality Europe 2013). This process would entail the explicit approval of each text published on the basis of the knowledge produced collectively. In practice, this proposal quickly reaches the limits of practicability: I began sending the PDTG the texts that I write and that are based on our research for their approval. But because they were written in academic English and needed to follow the standards of academic writing to be recognized in academic debate as valid knowledge, they did not translate well into the context of the PDTG. Reading and commenting on them, they told me, would require work and time that they do not have. Expecting them to read everything I write is neither their main priority nor would it do justice to the relations of trust we have built. We have discussed this dilemma and decided that I write a short summary of each text I publish on the basis of the research conducted with them. I also sent them a summary of my dissertation in Spanish in which the arguments made were clearly signalled. Each text is sent with enough time to review and comment and if needed, they can then ask for more details and ask for revisions. Of course, such a strategy means that they need to trust me to not misrepresent the texts I have written in the summaries and include the points that might provoke disagreement. A sustained dialogue over the content and contours of the research results, however, needs to be fostered through other

means – for example, another trip to Peru, as I have argued previously. As the PDTG's internal composition and strategic outlook has changed since my research, sending summaries is acknowledged, but maintaining a continuous dialogue has been difficult.⁶

Our experience shows, I would argue, that setting new standards for decolonial validation, like social movement peer-review processes, means recentering the researcher as main locus of attention. As the research undertaken is largely incidental to the broader emancipatory project the PDTG pursues, insisting on validation would have relieved my ethical and political burden but shifted the work to the PDTG. As the research contains aspects that might weaken or delegitimize their political work, however, the decision what to publish, and how to present and disseminate the knowledge produced should not be taken unilaterally. Our solution has proven to be prone to frustration, but yet strives to keep open the spaces for accountability.

I also committed myself to organizing and conducting workshops that use the main findings of the dissertation as basis for collectively reflecting on the difficulties and possibilities of building solidarity across difference, anchoring the research results in the realities on the ground and translating them to the practices of social movements. A book in Spanish including both the results of the dissertation research and of the workshops will be published by the PDTG in Peru with them as co-authors – using Spanish and thus the normalized language of communication in Peru does not challenge the hierarchization of the different languages in use in the country but will reach those that participated in the encounters at least. The aim of both moves is to make the knowledge produced relevant and politically useful for social movements as well as to challenge the separation between theory and practice, academic and activist as well as between individual and collective processes of knowledge production at least partially.

To further our common aim of destabilizing the hegemonic logics of who is recognized as producer of academically relevant knowledge, we also co-organized a workshop on committed research at the annual conference of the Latin American Studies Association in April 2017, bringing the knowledge on how to build collaborative projects into academic spaces.

CONCLUSION

Postcolonial feminist research ethics and politics are anchored in multiple sites. They urge the researcher to perceive research not as contained to a single

6 As this chapter is explicitly concerned with my perspective on our research collaboration, I translated and sent the complete text to the PDTG, but I did not obtain any concrete feedback.

location or struggle but to trace the multifaceted processes that link different locations across global North and South. Fostering such connections implies entering into encounters that are mediated by ‘that which must already have taken place to allow the particular encounter to take place’ (Ahmed 2000, 9): One can neither escape hegemonic relations of knowledge and power nor the histories of extractive and colonizing research that continue to separate and fragment. And yet, encounters are never fully predetermined; there exists the potential for transformation and transgression and thus for the fostering of relations from which other practices and knowledges can grow. My account has shown, I hope, that whether research contributes to decolonization or reinforces colonizing logics is not based on one’s intentions alone but on finding ways to learn how to be accountable to each other in a context that is geared towards separating connections and individualizing knowledge.

One possible way to challenge these logics is, I would argue, working through the moments of frustration and failure that arise during research. They are key for understanding how we are embedded in colonizing logics that are powerful in shaping how we encounter others based on perceptions of similarity and difference: Assuming similarity with members of the PDTG because we shared a comparable educational background as well as political and activist points of reference meant that I entertained certain expectations of how our research should develop and how we should relate to each other. These assumed resonances meant that I felt it more acutely when our communication faltered, or disagreements arose. Using the very moments in which expectations were frustrated as collective learning experience is a productive, but difficult, path that we have only begun to walk. Nonetheless, it has the potential to strengthen decolonizing knowledge practices if applied more rigorously on at least two levels: On the one hand, these moments can contribute to decolonizing social relations and the self as they reveal how colonizing logics are incarnated and performed. On the other hand, they allow for recognizing how colonizing logics impact on the knowledge that is created by steering perceptions and interpretations of the social worlds we need to make sense of.

If the knowledge created in research across North-South divides is to challenge rather than stabilize colonial relations and irritate rather than confirm colonizing norms and knowledge, one need to be attentive to the moments in which colonizing logics clash with postcolonial feminist ethics and politics. Being able to work through these moments depends on the willingness to tear down academic walls of neutrality and distance as well as activist walls of impeccability and righteousness, allowing for vulnerability and mistakes as points of entrance for collective critical learning. Striving for decolonizing research, we need to ensure that what enters academia is not knowledge abstracted from the lived realities it stems from, but knowledge explicitly

embedded in embodied practices of encounter and collective learning. The postcolonial feminist politics of linking can serve as guiding posts for creating knowledges that continue to live in relation and challenge the separations on which academic research is built.

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Chapter 6

Community Accountable Scholarship within a Critical Participatory Action Research Model

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On her website, self-described ‘queer black troublemaker’ and ‘Black feminist love evangelist’ Dr Alexis Pauline Gumbs explains her concept of ‘community accountable scholarship’ (Gumbs n.d.). To do so, she quotes the words of Audre Lorde that constitute the title of this book, ‘The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house’. She proceeds by reminding us of the oft-overlooked sentence that comes *after* those words in Lorde’s famous essay: ‘This fact is only threatening to those who still define the master’s house as their only source of support’ (Lorde 2007).

For Gumbs, ‘community accountable scholarship’ means activating or building a network of support in communities of struggle beyond the master’s house that one’s academic research can both root itself in and answer to at the end of the day. For instance, Gumbs has turned her PhD research on poets like Audre Lorde and June Jordan into podcasts and webinars, workbooks and zines, and community workshops through the *Eternal Summer of the Black Feminist Mind*, a multimedia community school. Together with Julia Roxanne Sangodare Wallace, Gumbs crowdfunded trips in an eco-friendly RV across the United States to interview LGBTQ black elders in their *Mobile Homecoming Project*. This ‘experiential archive project . . . amplifies generations of Queer Black brilliance’ (Allied Media Projects n.d.) by not only recording these elders’ oral histories but re-enacting their strategies for surviving and thriving: ‘If the Salsa Soul Sisters hosted women’s softball events with radical childcare . . . we’ll do it again in collaboration with the sisters who invented it so that an intergenerational community can relive this possible social life’ (Gumbs and Wallace n.d.). They describe their method as ‘baptismal listening’ rather than ethnography, an aspiration to become kin with interviewees through queer family-making (Gumbs and Wallace, n.d.) rather than treating them as objects of study.

This vision of community stretches across generations, suggesting that we root our academic labour in both our futures (what can we contribute to where we are going?) and our pasts (who are our ancestors?). It requires us to ask: Who need I give an account of myself and my work to? What are my deepest purposes and values? From whom did I learn them, and with whom do I share them? Who is my community and who are my *people*? Community accountable scholarship is grounded in the idea that ‘the most lasting, and appropriate transmission of knowledge is IN community through lived experiences’ (Gumbs and Wallace n.d.).

When Gumbs coined this term, she was drawing from the *community accountability and transformative justice movement* (abbreviated hereafter as CA-TJ), which she has been affiliated with through UBUNTU, a women of colour and sexual violence survivor-led organization in Durham, North Carolina. Transformative justice emerged from intersectional feminist voices searching for different solutions to sexual and partner violence than the criminal legal system. As feminism has gained institutional ground and entered the realm of governance, mainstream feminists have advocated strongly for law-and-order solutions to gender-based violence, seeing the state as a protector. But anti-racist movements, most recently Black Lives Matter, have shown how state violence surveils, criminalizes and punishes communities of colour. At the intersections of these two movements, women, trans, and queer people of colour have turned to community, rather than the state, for responses to violence. The CA-TJ approach builds on a feminist ethics of care that emphasizes shared vulnerability and interdependency, embodied in the figure of the community (Brazzell 2015). The crisis of sexual violence – and the violation of boundaries and injury to the self that it involves – becomes an impetus for the counterintuitive: for opening towards interdependency at the precise moment when social relations have wounded, and for seeing social connection as a resource at the moment when it appears most precarious.

My participatory research on the CA-TJ movement comes out of my own engagement in the anti-violence field over the past fifteen years, facilitating educational workshops, perpetrator accountability processes, and community responses to harm, as well as networking with other practitioners. The Transformative Justice Collective I co-founded in Berlin, Germany, engaged in skill-sharing conversations with U.S.-based activists. Inspired by Gumbs’ model as a way to bridge praxis and research, these conversations developed into fourteen semi-structured interviews with movement activist-thinkers, including Gumbs, as part of a formal research project. Movement-related media and writings, as well as organizational materials shared by interviewees, were also analysed. My research question focused on the principles uniting diverse transformative justice practices, so interviewees were drawn from various types of organizations across the United

States, including self-organized groups (Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective) and formal non-profits (Move to End Violence), with a focus ranging from gender (Challenging Male Supremacy) to queer identity (Safe OUTside the System Collective at the Audre Lorde Project) to racialized/ethnicized communities (API Chaya and the San Francisco Asian Women's Shelter). The majority of interviewees were identified as people of colour and women or non-binary. The project culminated with a website (whatreallymakesussafe.com) that makes interview excerpts and summaries of findings accessible as a movement-building and archival resource. The German section of the site details the process of knowledge transfer back to my Berlin communities through university seminars, public events, an exhibition and a toolkit.

My findings crystallize and theorize the concept of accountability developed within the movement. This chapter offers a dialogue between the content of my research and its methods, or what I learnt about the concept of accountability and how I practiced accountability in the research itself. It contributes to broader conversations on accountability within the participatory action research (PAR) field. PAR prioritizes participation, democratic power-sharing and accountability to counteract long-standing hierarchies between academics and the marginalized communities they study and use research as a tool for and enactment of social change. By shedding light on the term 'accountability', I offer firmer contours of the term for the participatory research community and elaborate upon Gumbs' vision of community accountable scholarship.

THE COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE MOVEMENT

Your friend is being abused by her partner. What would you do if calling the police or turning to state services is more likely to cause harm than benefit? For women and non-binary persons who are sex workers, undocumented immigrants, people of colour, queer, disabled, homeless or facing repression due to their activism, this is not a theoretical question, but one of urgent necessity. Social welfare institutions like schools (Nocella et al. 2014), child protective services and foster care (Roberts 1995, 2012) and even women's and homeless shelters (Koyama 2006) make up a 'carceral assistential net' (Wacquant 2009) of feminized punitive social control that complements the prison, traditionally gendered masculine. For non-binary persons and women who do come into contact with the criminal legal system directly, the most marginalized rarely experience safety and often risk further harm through law enforcement contact (Ritchie 2006; Ritchie and Davis 2017; Thompson

2018): retraumatization, deportation, losing custody of children or criminalization of their self-defence or survival activities. For some survivors who can access the system, the problem lies in the logic of the criminal legal system itself. If survivors feel that ‘two wrongs don’t make a right’, or that real accountability and safety are not possible within a punitive system (even when functioning at its best), they may not seek justice there at all.

Women of colour stand at the dangerous intersections of both state and interpersonal violence, both of which take gendered and sexualized forms. Kimberlé Crenshaw argues that the ‘intersectional failures’ (2012, 1451) of social movements to examine violence through the lens of women of colour’s experience has led them to see only part of the story. In the case of anti-racist movements working against police brutality and mass incarceration, a focus on state violence came at the expense of an analysis of interpersonal violence, and in the feminist movement, the reverse. As bridges between both movements, women and queer, trans and gender non-conforming people of colour have pointed out the need for each to recognize the contribution of the other (INCITE! and Critical Resistance 2008): that interpersonal violence must be understood in the context of state violence and vice versa, in order to develop responses that adequately respond to both race- and gender-based oppressions.¹ On the one hand, these activists demanded that organizations working to abolish institutions of state violence like policing and prisons recognize their male-centeredness and consider the particular ways that state violence is gendered and sexualized (INCITE! 2006; Stanley and Smith 2011). They also demanded that activists recognize that ending state violence will not of itself end interpersonal violence, including rape and abuse within activist communities, which thus require sustainable alternatives to prisons and policing (INCITE! and Critical Resistance 2008). On the other hand, these activists pointed out how ‘whitestream’ (Grande 2003) feminist and queer social movements have advocated for law-and-order solutions to violence, allying with conservative forces and the state’s racialized punitive strategies. Examples of this ‘carceral feminism’ (Bernstein 2007, 2012; Law 2014) in the United States include close collaboration between law enforcement and survivor advocates (Richie 2012); mandatory arrest laws for domestic violence calls to police (Ruttenberg 1994; Urs 2014); sex offender registries (Meiners 2009; Tyson 2014); and anti-trafficking ‘rescue’ industries (Musto 2016). As counter-voices, these critics have insisted that the state participates

¹ There is a long history of black women figuring as a ‘bridge’ between various political spheres which deny aspects of their experience and make it impossible for them to feel at home (to use the imagery of Cherrie Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa’s seminal anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, 1984). This act of ‘bridging’ encompasses black women’s interventions into misogyny in anti-racist spaces such as the Civil Rights movement, as well as their calling out of racism in white-dominated feminist contexts in the 1970s. For more, see Hull, Smith and Bell-Scott (1993).

in structural oppression and enables interpersonal violence; thus, it cannot be called upon as a solution to such violence.

Various community-based organizations have been building alternative visions of healing, safety and accountability that do not partake in the state's *carceral logics* (Tourmaline and Spade, 2014) of individual liability and punishment.² They have drawn on kitchen-table histories of collective responses to violence in times and places where the state was not an option (Bierria, Kim and Rojas Durazo 2011; Dixon 2015b), as well as justice models from indigenous communities, now appropriated outside those communities and popularized as *restorative justice*. Early CA-TJ innovators drew inspiration from restorative justice's methods but also critiqued its lack of analysis of oppression and lack of a social movement orientation, allowing it to be co-opted as a supplement rather than a challenge to state violence (Kershner et al. 2007). While the term *transformative justice* is also used in the restorative justice sector and in post-conflict transitional justice in the global South, the model discussed here emerged from a unique social movement rooted in abolitionism, women of colour feminism and the black radical tradition.

Out of these experiments has grown a body of theory and practice of community-based, self-organized responses to sexual and partner violence designed to support survivors, prevent future violence and hold perpetrators and communities accountable without recourse to state institutions. INCITE! Women, Gender Non-Conforming and Trans people of Color Against Violence, the national network of feminist activists and scholars who first coined the term *community accountability* (2003), understand the concept to integrate four main areas of work (2008, see Figure 6.1). Along one axis are the interpersonal elements of survivor self-determination and perpetrator accountability, and along the other are the wider components of community and structural, political transformation.

Many anti-violence and empowerment strategies can be practiced from a CA-TJ perspective. My interviewees, for instance, were involved in a range of activities, including long-term accountability and education processes with perpetrators, building local networks of CA-TJ-friendly service providers like therapists, workshops with women in prison and 'Safe Outside the System' trainings with local businesses.

2 Organizations that have helped develop CA-TJ approaches include INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA), Creative Interventions, generationFIVE, Communities United Against Violence, The Northwest Network, Philly Stands Up, Critical Resistance, Support NY, Project NIA and countless others, including many self-organized projects with lower visibility.



Figure 6.1. INCITE!'s Community Accountability Model

Source: INCITE! 2008, 69-70; design modified with permission by author

In my research, I argue that the movement articulates a discursive shift from the dominant carceral logic towards an ethic of social connection in each of these four fields (see Figure 6.2)

- Specifically, in the realm of structures, I look at the shift in concepts of responsibility from individual blame to collective accountability
- In the field of survivors, the shift from protectionist security to safety through empowerment and self-determination
- In the realm of perpetrators, the shift from punishment to transformation and accountability
- And lastly, in the field of community, the shift from the state to the community as the appropriate setting for addressing violence



Figure 6.2. Community Accountability's Discursive Shifts from Carceral Logic to an Ethics of Social Connection

Source: author

The movement should not be thought of as singular, nor do CA-TJ-oriented groups and individuals operate with any one concept of accountability, but rather many that are refined through experimentation. Indeed, in my interviews, the question ‘What is accountability?’ incited a lot of debate and creative musing. What is presented here is a heuristic I have distilled out of the research, a photograph of a concept very much alive and in motion.

Lessons for community-accountable research practice

When decolonizing, democratizing or queering research practice in order to disrupt dominant narratives with the voices of those who have been silenced by them, the question of accountability often emerges, but the term itself is rarely defined, leaving it vague or at worst euphemistic. In my review of critical, feminist and decolonial PAR literature, the term showed up often in correlation with concepts like participation, ownership, collectivity, reciprocity, positionality and parity. (It also shows up less often than its broader, and vaguer, counterpart ‘responsibility’.) PAR researchers all tend to agree with Lynne C. Manzo and Nathan Brightbill that ‘the PAR model broadens current interpretations of accountability’ (2008, 37), but rarely is the concept of accountability subject to conceptual analysis and theoretical clarification. I look towards the CA-TJ movement’s concept of accountability to better define the contours of accountability for critical participatory research, laying out a few lessons learnt from the movement and looking at how they were enacted in my own project. The content of my research comes to bear on its methods, entailing a translation from the context of interpersonal violence,

where the concept of accountability was developed, to a context of research (which can also be the scene of epistemic violence). Some things will, as always, get lost in translation.

Taking versus giving account

As stated earlier, my work focused on the movement's discursive shifts from a carceral norm to an ethic of social connection. In the following table (table 6.1), I lay out some major contrasts between a carceral conception of accountability and a community-based one:

Table 6.1 Comparison of Carceral and Community Accountability Models

	<i>Carceral Accountability</i>	<i>Community Accountability</i>
<i>Subject</i>	Individual subject of liberalism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • atomistic • sovereign 	Subjects embedded in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communities of care • structures of oppression
<i>Mode</i>	Taking account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • debt • 'just deserts' 	Giving account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • response • narrative
<i>Object</i>	Rights – legalism	Relationships – care ethics
<i>Scope</i>	Universal laws applied to particular cases	Community and context specific

The model of responsibility on which the *prison industrial complex* (Davis) and other carceral institutions of society are built is what philosopher Iris Marion Young (2011) theorizes as the 'liability model' of responsibility, in which one is responsible for actions that one voluntarily, knowingly and intentionally causes. Implicitly, the subject in this model is the sovereign subject of liberalism: an atomistic, autonomous subject of rational and free choice whose actions and their consequences are fully transparent to him. In this model, accountability is akin to debt: my misdeeds are seen as the result of moral or rational failures of self-governance (responsibility as 'attributionality' or 'self-disclosure'; see Watson 1996). I incur a debt by violating the rights of others which must be repaid through a deprivation of my rights in proportion to my wrongdoing: these are my 'just deserts', or appropriate rewards and punishments, fulfilled through retributive punishment (the biblical 'eye for an eye'). Accountability here means 'taking account': a mathematical calculation whereby harm is extracted out of its human context in order to make equivalencies between harms and to distribute universal punishments. In the criminal legal system, these are meted out in the abstract measure of time as prison sentences. The function of the calculation is to distribute moral guilt and divide up the ownership of misdeeds. This moral economy is binary and affectively laden: certain individuals who are perceived as the source of harm are bad and blameworthy, while victims are innocent and morally intact.

One of my interviewees, social justice consultant Maura M. Bairley, highlights the brutality concealed by such accounting of human life, a mathematical logic at work both within the context of gender-based violence and within the activist and non-profit organizational settings in which research can take place:

Being called to account is very much about an accounting ledger . . . I increasingly, I want to say almost like ‘recreasingly’, am thinking about the contribution of American chattel slavery to how we think about women and how we think about sexual violence and violence against women, or gender justice, and just how deeply engrained the dehumanizing, commodifying, capitalizing impulse is in that experience. And how it shows up in contemporary images and discourse around women, around whose bodies are valuable, about what value means. It shows up all the time in leadership and human resources work. The notion of ‘human capital’ comes from slavery, and yet we use that term as if it were, you know, appropriate. (Bairley 2014)

Indeed, economicistic discourses of ‘accountability’ go far beyond the law enforcement context, permeating the language of corporations and universities. Critical participatory action researcher Caitlin Cahill critiques the ethical vocabulary of the Institutional Review Board that regulates academic research on human subjects for its moral abstraction, its legalistic notion of consent and its minimal, apolitical concept of ‘doing no harm’ (2007). This vocabulary also trickles into funding imperatives for nonprofits, as shown in one PAR project which explored the required implementation of ‘results-based accountability’ as a performance measurement in social justice-oriented community organizations in Australia (Keevers et al. 2012). This neoliberal *non-profit industrial complex* has also been the target of critique by INCITE! (2007), one of the leading voices in the CA-TJ movement, signalling a struggle to reclaim and reinvigorate the word ‘accountability’ in social justice contexts as a way to genuinely challenge power from below.

What are those means? A community accountability model starts with a radically different concept of the subject: socially constructed both within relationships of intimacy, recognition and identification and through relationships of power and oppression. Individuals are shaped by different levels of intersubjectivity, ranging from family to social structures. Violence does not originate in individual moral failure but is socially learnt, and violence at interpersonal levels is enabled and reinforced by violence at structural and state levels.

In this model, responsibility for causing harm is a mode of *response* to my relations with others, relations which constitute me and which I cannot master. This model of intersubjectivity draws on counter-hegemonic social ontologies from indigenous, disability, feminist and postcolonial movements

and theories,³ as well as concepts of responsibility from Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler. In a community accountability framework, harm is framed not primarily as a violation of rights but of particular human relationships, necessitating a community- and context-specific response to repair and transform those relationships, rather than the application of universal laws to a particular case. In this form of response, I give an account of myself and my actions, a narrative, an explanation. As Dr Gumbs was one of the interviewees in my project, I'll share her words:

I have really been very literal about accountability . . . being able to give an account: can we tell each other what's going on. When it comes to responding to the spectrum of sexual violence and gendered violence in our culture, that becomes really important to me because silencing is such a major factor in sexual violence. . . . Often it is like 'Oh, accountability . . . is doing the right thing'. But there has to be . . . communication, a way that we can witness and be a record and share with each other. (Gumbs 2014)

Several of my interviewees spoke about how the first step in moving away from an individualizing criminal justice approach for addressing harm requires strengthening community bonds as well as building our capacity to have honest and painful discussions about the ways we are not living up to our values and visions.⁴ Because the carceral system has the effect of disintegrating community bonds, and because isolation can be a major factor in enabling violent behaviour, CA-TJ approaches seek to reintegrate persons causing harm into meaningful communities that will keep them in check.

Ejeris Dixon, formerly of the Safe OUTside the System Collective at the Audre Lorde Project in New York, shared:

If you have a strong group of relationships, it is actually the glue that helps hold someone . . . So coming in to working with someone who has harmed, you know their parents, their cousins, where they go – you have this range of relationships, the information you get is different, the support that they get is different, and the folks who are holding them accountable is broader. (Dixon 2015a)

Interviewee Alix Johnson (2013) from the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective confirmed: 'We've always seen relationship-building as not being the precursor to the work but actually being the work itself'.

³ While it's not possible to do citational justice to all these genealogies, what I want to highlight here are indigenous and non-Western views that recognize and/or celebrate the interconnectedness of the environment and human and non-human animals; feminist care ethics that emphasizes the value of interdependency; and crip, trans, black and other marginalized epistemologies grounded in the insights of standpoint theory, that our ways of knowing are entangled in our social embodiments.

⁴ Morgan Bassichis of Communities United Against Violence and Shannon Perez-Darby of the Northwest Network both define accountability as the alignment of actions with one's values (Kim et al. 2012; Perez-Darby 2011).

Relationship building and mutual benefit

The first contour of community accountable research practice I want to emphasize is that research is an act of creating and strengthening relationships of mutual benefit, of building community (or, in Dr Gumbs' case, building kinship).

What did this lesson look like in practice in the 'What *really* makes us safe?' project, which was the culmination of a decade-long journey in anti-violence work? After being introduced to CA-TJ approaches by visionary colleagues in New York and moving to Berlin, I founded a transformative justice collective that translates such approaches into our own communities in the German context. The interviews initially grew out of our collective's desire for exchange and the need to critically reflect on our work in Berlin. This was one way to be accountable to those who had come before us in the movement. As the project expanded for my master's thesis, conversations with both my interviewees and fellow Berlin activists, especially members of the collective, offered an opportunity to gnaw on the questions emerging in the research, share materials and resources, get critical feedback and transfer new knowledge back to Berlin communities. My impression was that a sense of commons was created between me and my interviewees through shared political struggles, values and visions, allowing the potential to build across both spatial distance and positional difference.

However, like the CA-TJ work that I've done on the ground, this research was an experimental learning process, often moving through struggle, failure, isolation and limited capacities. The topic itself (sexual and intimate partner violence) limited the research relationships that it was possible to build. I realized early on that the delicacy and trust needed to interview survivors or persons who had caused harm about their own community accountability processes would go beyond my own capacities as a solo researcher. As other community researchers working on this topic have found, the chronic invisibility of sexual and partner violence due to its relegation to the gendered private sphere can make it feel like you are 'doing community research without a community' (as reflected in the title of Campbell et al. 2004). Focusing instead on interviews with social movement activists in the field, who may also have overlapping identities as survivors or persons causing harm but were not directly addressed in my interviews as such, led to a clearer sense of community, shared positionality and shared purpose, which included archiving and advancing movement practices. Thus, by approaching people from the perspective of exchange and mutual skill-sharing, many interviewees perceived me as a colleague rather than an outside researcher. So while I (and our collective) was largely in a position of learning, we were also seen as having something of mutual benefit to share. This commitment to mutual

benefit drove my approach to research products, ensuring that interviewees received transcripts and recordings of our conversations.

Many brilliant organizers, consultants and educators spoke to me about their work. However, their participation in the study was often limited by a lack of time, capacity and, in all likelihood, interest and desire. My interviewees lived in different cities around North America, which meant a transnational networking and exchange that existed largely in the realm of the internet but without a shared geographic community or tangible local impact. As a white, hetero woman, I also stand outside many of the shared experiences central to the movement. This created distances which limited the ability to fully form relationships of accountability with those who participated.

Bringing the work home

Reflecting upon those distances also called upon me to bring the work back home to my local setting in Berlin. This required translation, literally and figuratively, of activist concepts and practices from the United States to Germany, from a carceral state to a waning welfare state, from a multicultural settler colony to a more racially homogenous colonial metropole. I planned a seminar at my home institution, Humboldt University, on ‘Carceral Feminisms and Transformative Alternatives’ and invited local activist-scholars as guest lecturers to draw parallels and mark divergences between state violence in the United States and Germany.

While there is evidence for a general ‘punitive turn’ in the penal regimes of Western capitalist democracies since the 1980s (Sutton 2004, 2013), German incarceration rates remain low and its legal system’s rehabilitative character tends towards informal and community sanctions (Oberwittler and Höfer 2005), providing a valuable contrast to the United States for studying alternatives to prison. However, Hartz reforms making social welfare benefits more punitive, welfare retrenchment through Eurocrisis austerity, heightening carceral restrictions on migrants’ mobility as a result of the migrant crisis, and recent police laws across Germany indicate increasing punitive social control and surveillance in German institutions beyond the prison and courtroom.

Before the seminar even began, mass sexual assaults took place in a public square in Cologne, Germany, on New Year’s Eve 2016. Racist media outlets and politicians used the accused perpetrators’ identities as migrant men of colour to further vilify Muslims in Germany as racial, civilizational ‘Others’ and advocate for stricter immigration and refugee policies. Some whitestream women’s advocates even joined the chorus, lending the discourse a pseudo-feminist air (Schwarzer 2016).

During our seminar, we discussed how these carceral feminist approaches, like colonial strategies before them, used the mythological figure of white

female purity, weaponizing gendered vulnerability to sexual violence in order to criminalize people of colour. The concise explanation of colonialism offered in Spivak's sentence 'White men saving brown women from brown men' (Spivak 1988) appears flexible and adaptive in our times: 'White men and women saving white women from brown men', for example.

Towards the end of the seminar, two pieces of carceral feminist legislation were passed. One changed the legal definition of sexual violence, basing it on consent rather than force (in German, the *Sexualstrafrechtreform* of §117StGB). This change had long been advocated for by feminists but the legislation proved to be a pyrrhic victory because conservatives wrote additional penalties targeting refugees and migrants into the legislation (§184jStGB) (Anders 2018). Another law was the 'Prostitution Protection Law' (*Prostituertenschutzgesetz*, or ProstSchG), which mandated government registration of all sex workers, further pushing undocumented migrant women into the shadows of the street economy.⁵ As a result, our seminar's analysis of state co-optation of queer and feminist concepts and/or their willing collusion in racialized state violence took on local urgency and relevance.

Together with students from the seminar, we organized a public panel discussion with some of our invited guest-speakers, and a further creative public event, a 'Lab for Alternatives to Prison and Policing'. This culminated in the *What really makes us safe? Toolkit for Activists* (in German: *Was macht uns wirklich sicher? Ein Toolkit zu intersektionaler transformativer Gerechtigkeit jenseits von Gefängnis und Polizei*), with contributions from local community organizations as well as students. All of these mediums helped to develop a public language around prison abolition and carceral feminism in Berlin, support activists in avoiding collusion and navigating co-optation and offer alternative strategies to prisons and policing developed out of years of practice by the Berlin Transformative Justice Collective.

While I had often oriented myself to the visionary ideas of U.S.-based movements, feeling far from the 'mothership', the work of returning home helped me embrace what I had undervalued: the meaningful audience and kinship I had built over the years with my own collective and local political communities.

Dimensions of responsibility

Relationships are always embedded in larger structures of power, just as activists imagine individual accountability nested within community

⁵ For analysis of these new laws and the public discourse surrounding them, see the articles in the 'Strafrechtsfeminismus & queere Straflust' section (pp. 77–110) of the *Was macht uns wirklich sicher? Toolkit zu intersektionaler transformativer Gerechtigkeit jenseits von Gefängnis und Polizei* published as a result of the 'What really makes us safe?' Project.

accountability. Revisiting Iris Marion Young's work offers a taxonomy of these various dimensions of responsibility. One of those is temporality. Accountability may orient itself backwards, towards harm done, requiring recognition of the harm caused, apology and reparation. But accountability can also have an additional, forward-looking component focused on transformation, so as to prevent harm from happening again. Another dimension of accountability is its scope. For instance, accountability could be individual, where I am accountable to myself (my own goals or commitments); interpersonal, where I am responsible to others that I stand in direct relation to; or structural, where I take responsibility for my participation in institutions and social structures responsible for oppression.

The carceral model can only address the individual level of accountability because it tends to deny relationality and isolate responsibility for social problems like violence to single individuals. By limiting responsibility to direct and intentional causality, this model cannot capture the complex, often unintentional and indirect ways that individuals participate in oppression (Young 2011). The carceral model thus tends to assign moral blame and punishment, establishing an affective moral economy between good victims worthy of protection and evil perpetrators worthy of punishment. (Although in practice, this affective economy often applies itself in reverse: those whose lives are most often seen as worthy of protection are more easily portrayed as victims, whereas those whose lives are seen as disposable are criminalized as perpetrators (Love & Protect and Survived & Punished 2017). Because responsibility is synonymous here with moral deficiency, it can only look backwards to adjudicate who is guilty for what has been done, but often fails to enjoin us to common, future action.

Kiyomi Fujikawa of the Seattle anti-violence organization API Chaya explains how a CA-TJ model shifts this carceral model of responsibility:

I'm not the cops, I'm not here to tell you such-and-such did their time and they get the gold star and they're 'safe' to be back in community. I want to move away from this assumption that some people are safe because of their actions and other people are not safe because of their actions. I want us to move towards looking at how are we all capable of causing harm, and asking: how do we form a community where we can still prevent harm from happening even though each one of us has the capacity to do harm? (Fujikawa 2014)

By moving beyond a binary economy of victim and perpetrator towards the universalization of the ability to both harm and be harmed, persons causing harm are humanized. Harm is something that we do, not something that we essentially *are*. As such, it is easier to imagine transformation.

Moreover, a CA-TJ model engages more dimensions of scope and temporality than a carceral model of blame. It enjoins backwards-looking repair

with forwards-looking transformation at all levels of accountability: individual, community and structural; and from a variety of connected actors: perpetrators, their communities, local organizations, larger institutions and so on. Similarly, researchers can chart out these various actors and dimension of accountability for their own work.

Power-shifting solidarity

When thinking about responsibility for structural oppression, many tend to scale the individualizing carceral model upwards to the structural level. This means scaling a model of individual guilt and punishment upwards to explain our responsibilities for our participation in structures of oppression, which can result in counterproductive phenomena like *white guilt*. In contrast, in social justice contexts in the United States, accountability is often used to describe the responsibilities of people in positions of power and privilege to those with less power – either positionally (a subordinate at work) or structurally (someone who experiences oppression). It is understood as a practice of building an ethos of trust, recognition, transparency, open communication, feedback and willingness to be critiqued, awareness of the limitations of one's own approach and experiences and solidarity between privileged and oppressed parties. These practices are imagined to take place in contexts of political organizing; as such, they are collective and forward-oriented in nature, although individual and backward-looking instances of accountability may still be necessary.

Thus, accountability wrestles with the complexities of the often distorted relationships between communities differentially affected by oppression and violence (Berman Cushing and Hitchcock 2010). Accountability is not built on a fantasy of formal equality, as if oppression were already over. It continues to consider the positional differences of various individuals and groups by asking for acts of power-sensitive alliance and solidarity (Members of European Dissent 2010), such as dominant group members mobilizing their access to resources to combat injustice, acting in a supporting role within movements where oppressed group members' voices are prioritized. It is not only aware of power differences between individuals and communities but also seeks to leverage privilege in order to shift power dynamics through structural change and interpersonal empowerment.

This is a further element of community-accountable scholarship: building community through research asks us to hold the pain or discomfort of organizing across histories of harm and trauma towards futures of equity, healing, justice and safety. Those in positions of privilege need forms of structural accountability that move beyond guilt and towards power-sensitive solidarity and collective liberation, requiring what may feel to a privileged person

like sacrifice or limitation but which holds out the promise of more powerful learning and connection.

How did these attempts at solidarity appear in the methods of my project? As I spoke about earlier, my own privileges manifested repeatedly as forms of distance and separation from the communities I was most inspired by and most wanted to contribute to. However, the movement's commitment to the universalization of our ability to harm and be harmed and the fact of our shared vulnerability instilled in me time and again hope in the possibility of developing some form of commons, no matter how thorny or rocky the path, that can hold difference and oppression beyond the punitive framework of individual guilt. By untangling oppression and violence as not necessarily overlapping relationships, acknowledging that people who are oppressed can also cause violence and harm, and imagining shared life with people who have caused harm and trauma, this politics provides a potent antidote to some of the more crude iterations of identity politics, which can seem to offer little hope of collaborative work across difference.

My efforts to be structurally accountable and relate to my interviewees in power-sensitive solidarity resulted in two more lessons I want to discuss: being a 'megaphone and not a microphone' (Crunk Feminist Collective 2013) and holding power accountably.

Be a megaphone, not a microphone

CA-TJ often recovers and reactivates the legacies of feminized and racialized labour of keeping folks safe from violence, legacies erased from official activist histories. Here is activist-scholar Alix Johnson of the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective (BATJC) again:

So before all of our meetings as the BATJC we do a collective grounding where we just take a couple minutes to get settled in our body and . . . light these candles. So we light one candle for the people who came before us, and one candle for the people who are with us now, and one candle for the next generation or the people who are yet to come. (Johnson 2013)

If accountability is a process of bearing witness to and celebrating the interrelations that constitute us, then as researchers our bibliographies, citation practices and use of quotations in our academic research products are our way of giving an account of and to our teachers, comrades and intellectual ancestors. Being 'a megaphone and not a microphone' (Crunk Feminist Collective 2013) means citing knowledge producers beyond the academy and seeking out unwritten activist genealogies, while being sensitive about the dilemmas of bringing them 'to light' in an academic context. Decolonial

scholars Eve Tuck, K. Wayne Yang and Rubén Gatzambide-Fernández initiated the ‘Citation Practices Challenge’ to encourage scholars to bring greater attention and intention to who and how they cite, with the explicit goal to ‘stop erasing Indigenous, Black, brown, trans*, disabled POC, QT*POC, feminist, activist, and disability/crip contributions from our intellectual genealogies’ (Gatzambide-Fernández, Tuck and Yang 2015). Being a megaphone also means making space for interviewees to speak for themselves, using their words not as ‘examples’ but as concepts. For my own work within political theory, treating activists as theorists and hybridizing academic and activist languages challenges disciplinary norms.

As megaphones, researchers are a medium for communicating the ideas of others. As Michelle Fine, María Elena Torre, and Caitlin Cahill, critical participatory action researchers associated with the Public Science Project, have discussed, a variety of research products are needed to reach different audiences that support different modes of engagement with the knowledge produced (Fine and Torre 2008; Torre and Cahill 2008). This requires us to make our words as accessible and transparent as possible throughout the research process as well as in our research products, and to reflect on how access is impacted by education, abilities and trauma. Linda Tuhiwai Smith explains what this could entail:

Sharing is a responsibility of research. The technical term for this is the dissemination of results, usually very boring to non-researchers, very technical and very cold. For indigenous researchers sharing is about demystifying knowledge and information and speaking in plain terms to the community. . . . Often the audience may need to be involved emotionally through laughter, deep reflection, sadness, anger, challenges and debate. (2012, 161)

Several of my interviewees talked about the need to document community accountability work as a resource for others. But many factors have been obstacles to such documentation: the marginality of those who have generated these practices, the experimental and improvised quality of many accountability processes (leading each one to be very different than the next), the self-organized nature of much of the work, leaving it no institutional home or memory, and the shame and pain that circles around sexual and partner violence, requiring extra attentiveness to anonymity when documenting.

As a contribution to the not-yet-built archive of transformative justice work, the project culminated with a website (www.whatreallymakesussafe.com) where excerpts from interviews and summaries of my findings are accessible to a wider audience as a movement-building resource. In addition, the German section of the site documents the Berlin-based aspects of the project with video recordings of our events and a free version of the toolkit.

The website was a way to use my time and resources to amplify the voices of those who participated in the project. Engaging with interviewees to edit and interpret their own quotes was my attempt to maximize their airtime and ensure their participation in how their voices are presented. This also meant prioritizing the website and other community-oriented events over the publication of academic research products with my individual name on them.

CONCLUSION: HOLDING POWER ACCOUNTABLY

Despite these efforts, I have indeed retained the ‘privilege of the last word’ (Decoloniality Europe qtd. in Exo 2014, 5) on my research. While learning through failures has taught me a great deal about how to build stronger relationships more conducive to collaborative research in the future, I still retain positions of decision-making power in the project that I must account for. While I wish for and invited deeper participation in the project, part of my structural accountability as an ally is knowing that I don’t get to set expectations for the way others choose to participate. It is important to honour any and all contributions and respect the time and resources being granted to a project.

Sherry Arnstein’s ‘Ladder of Participation’ (1969) and its many variations offer helpful guides for assessing the level of participation in our own research projects, which may occupy several different rungs of the ladder at once. Most of us are living inside of processes where we are moving towards democratic power-sharing or fuller collaboration in research, but still find ourselves in positions of power, unsure of how to hold them accountably. Many of us have what Movement Strategy Center has called an ‘ambivalence towards power’ (Zimmerman et al. 2010, 18). As my interviewee, social justice organizational consultant Maura Bairley explained:

We are deeply ambivalent about power, partly because we imagine power only as we’ve seen it abused . . . Thinking about the violence frame and thinking about the families and communities that many of us grew up in, what other forms of power have we seen besides power that is abusive? . . . There is a way that we have merged power and abuse as if they were the same thing, and it is hard for us to imagine that we could have positive power, co-power, power with . . . Even though we use the word ‘empowerment’, I think on some level we think that all forms of power and authority, meaning the right to make binding decisions over others, are inherently abusive. (Bairley 2014)

This ambivalence about power is compounded by the fact that, in my experience, social justice and participatory research contexts tend to fetishize direct democracy as the highest form of participation, even if other forms of decision-making might be more conducive to participation or better respect

peoples' capacities. For instance, in CA-TJ processes addressing sexual violence, democratic decision-making is often plagued by a need for separating those experiencing harm and those causing it, producing sometimes necessary asymmetries in who gets what information and who makes which decisions. Ultimately, we need to be clear with ourselves about where our projects stand in the ladder of participation, and to be explicit about the roles and responsibilities imputed onto us and others at that rung on the ladder, even as projects can modulate from more to less participation over time.

I leave us with Maura Bairley's open question of how to reimagine and practice power beyond the frame of violence and abuse. As we strive to climb the ladder in our research towards fuller collaboration through PAR models, a CA-TJ inspired model of accountability may serve as a valuable rung along the way for creating accountability in persistent situations of power asymmetry.

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Chapter 7

'Tell Us Something about Yourself, Too' – Reflections on Collaborative Research as a Tool for a Reflexive Methodology

Miriam friz Trzeciak

Much has been written in migration studies about the situations, social networks and routes of migrants entering the global North.¹ At the same time, the perspectives on the impact and social meanings of mobility has mainly focused on persons in the receiving countries. In doing so, these studies tend to overlook the 'coloniality of migration' (Bhabra 2017; Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018). My chapter seeks to shift away from this and to capture the social worlds shaped by migration from the narratives and experiences of the individuals and communities in their places of origin. To do this, I will utilize a decolonial intersectional lens and investigate how indigenous communities in the Southern Mexican borderland perceive and negotiate migration processes.

During my collaborative fieldwork in La Selva Lacandona in the state of Chiapas in 2012, 2013 and 2016, my research participants and I began to discuss ways in which my research could be shaped in a way that would resemble more of a dialogical process. However, finding dialogical methods of doing research and disseminating and sharing knowledge together was not the only interest for my empirical study. When I was sitting around with a group of Tseltal-Maya women in their home community near the town of Ocosingo after a group discussion one of the younger women, Mariana, asked me: 'Tell us something about yourself, too. We don't really know you' (Mariana, personal conversation, NSF/Ocosingo, 13 April 2012, own translation).

The question from my interview partner highlighted the power relations that existed between me as the researcher, and my interview partner, a point that is not often examined and stays unanswered or is even silenced in ethnographic texts (critically see Clifford 1986). During the interview process I gained several

¹ I am grateful to Ulrike Roth and Franziska Müller for their comments on my chapter.

insights about the perspectives, life stories and social knowledge of my interview partners; however, because of my position as the interviewer, I revealed very little information about myself. Thus, the request from my interview partner to tell something about myself not only expressed curiosity and interest in me being an outsider but it also revealed the participants' claim for horizontality and the negotiation of dialogical knowledge praxis by challenging the binary roles of the researcher/scientific person from the global North and the researched/unscientific person from the global South.

Feminist and decolonial approaches have argued that 'the construction of a new feminist geopolitics of knowing and loving' (Lugones 2010, 756) does not only take into account the 'intellectual resistance to associated forms of epistemological dominance' of Western and Eurocentric thought (Bhabha 2014, 120). Therefore, in order to create alternative and critical forms of knowledge, methodology – the process of generating knowledge – must also be revisited from an ethical perspective (Tilley 2017, 40). In a nutshell, doing collaborative or participative research takes into account marginalized, different and alternative points of view (Escobar 2007). In doing so, this approach expands the ethical standards of 'good academical research practice' towards a more dialogical and, as possible, horizontal process (Meckesheimer 2013, 81). But to what extent is it possible to realize research collaboratively and dialogically within the (limited) scope of a doctoral thesis which is located within the context and the logic of an academic institution in the global North? How can ever closer horizontal and dialogical relations be created between activist scholars from the global North and activists and social movement actors from the global South, or, with the words of Daniel Mato (2000), how can a research process be shaped to study with the people and not the people?

These questions will guide the argument of my paper. They do only emanate from my geopolitically situated positionality and reflexivity. Rather, they stem from feminist and decolonial ethics towards the production of knowledge (Anzaldúa 1989; Espinosa Miñoso, Gómez Correal and Ochoa Muñoz, 2014; Leyva Solano and Rappaport 2011; Lugones 2007). Based on my own research experience, I will reflect on the possibilities and pitfalls of a more dialogical and collaborative-oriented research. First, I start by *contextualizing* my reflections and introducing the context of my fieldwork and my research design. Second, I will introduce the methodological framework of Boaventura de Sousa Santos' *Epistemologies of the South* (2014), Orlando Fals Borda's concepts of *sentipensar* [thinking-feeling] (1987) and participatory action-research (PAR) (Fals Borda and Rahman 1991) and *educación popular* [popular education] coined by Paulo Freire (2000) which shaped my thinking and proceeding/approaching during my multi-sited research. While Sousa Santos' approach serves as an epistemological framework of accessing marginalized or even silenced forms of indigenous or subaltern

knowledge, I understand PAR and popular education as methodological tools for collaborative research. Both methods have been designed in cooperation with social movements and marginalized groups within the different contexts of Latin America in the 1970s. These approaches call for a dialogical and horizontal negotiation of research in which the subjects are fundamentally involved. Third, I will address the question of *positionality*. The question of positionality concerns my ‘situated knowledge’ (Haraway 1988) as well as the (shifting) locations I have adopted during my research. By describing the process of collaboration and the (somewhat limited) possibilities of field research and dissemination of knowledge, I will, last, explore the possibilities of a reflexive procedure. I conclude by resuming the challenges and obstacles for collaborative research within the framework of a PhD.

CONTEXT AND RESEARCH DESIGN: SOCIAL WORLDS OF STAYING AND MIGRATION IN THE SOUTHERN MEXICAN BORDERLAND

My doctoral research explores the experiences and meanings of different movements of migration from transregional communities of origin in the Southern Mexican region La Selva Lacandona. Migration studies over the past years have focused on the whereabouts, transnational networks and the routes of migration, but have overlooked the perspectives of those who stay and thereby stabilize migration dynamics (critically see Toyota, Yeoh and Nguyen 2007). This research gap motivated me to reconstruct social worlds of migrating, staying and returning. Taking the perspectives of the individuals and communities staying at home, I understand transnationality as a temporal and spatial continuum ‘from low (very few and unsustained ties across borders) to high (multiple and dense ties and continuous over time)’ (Faist 2012, 52) which has implications for both, the people leaving as well as the people staying.

I developed my research interest during a journey to Chiapas involving human rights monitoring with the Human Rights Center Fray Bartolomé de las Casas in 2010. During my stay, activists and members of social movements informed me that migration had been challenging the collective social worlds of local communities and social movements; however, regional mobility was not a new phenomenon in the region. Migration to the north began to increase in the 1990s in the midst of economic liberalization, which was accelerated by the North American Free Trade Agreement,² and during

2 The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was implemented on 1 January 1994, established a free trade zone between Canada, Mexico and the United States. In the course of the preliminary hearings, in February 1992, the Mexican parliament decided to modify Article 27 of the constitution, which had secured the collective access to land since the Mexican Revolution.

this period the living conditions of small-scale farmers began to deteriorate (Riosmena and Massey 2012). As a result of this, surviving and making a living through the subsistence economy became considerably more difficult.

These narratives gave me the cue to conduct interviews on the perspectives of the people staying at their communities of origin. My initial hypothesis was that the positions of the individuals staying in their places of origin play an integral part in the migration process. Sustaining and shaping the social order in the places of origin means that those who are left behind are able to actively participate in the transregional and transnational continuum between receiving and sending communities. Taking the perspectives of my interview partners who live in the Selva Lacandona region in South Mexico as a starting point, it can be argued that South-North mobilities do not only refer to global inequalities and the ‘coloniality of migration’ (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018). Within the communitarian governance systems, the migration of discrete members rather plays a formative role for the whole community. Migration – from the decision to leave, to the way of dealing with absence, to the return and to the negotiation of belonging – assumes a collective significance.

The following questions were central for my research interest: What does migration mean from the perspective of those who stay? Who stays, who migrates and who does (not) come back? How do local social orders change in the context of migration? How does migration contribute to social transformation or reinforce social inequalities at the places of origin? To find answers to these questions, in collaboration with the women’s rights NGO Centro de Investigación y Acción de la Mujer Latinoamericana A.C. and the Human Rights Center Fray Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada A.C., I realized a multi-sited ethnography (Marcus 1995). Multi-sited research, a concept coined by George E. Marcus in the context of the debate on ‘writing culture’, is an active and multi-perspective approach where the ethnographer permanently constructs the field of interest. Marcus (1998) highlights that ‘multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography’ (Marcus 1998, 105). Thus, this approach of ethnography can be understood as an allegorical narrative of cultural representation (Clifford 1986). In this vein, multi-sited ethnography becomes a highly self-reflexive tool, which involves revising one’s positionality as well as applying ethical procedures when carrying out the research (Amelina and Faist 2012).

Ejido lands, areas of communal land mainly used for agriculture, can be privatized ever since. Many indigenous social movements have considered this neoliberal land reform as an attack on communitarian systems of government and, thus, as a threat to indigenous livelihoods.

For my research, I conducted eighteen problem-centred and expert interviews with relatives of migrants, migrated and returned persons, as well as experts from the research context and NGOs. In addition to this, I conducted focus group discussions with local assemblies in three communities and participated in workshops that were based on popular education around the subject. These workshops were organized by Human Rights Center Fray Pedro and focused on informing people about the dangers and legal situation related to migration and ways that would make the migration processes safe. To analyse my data, I used Grounded Theory/Situational Analysis, which is a method that seeks to revise the theoretical groundings of grounded theory towards post-modern approaches (Clarke 2005). Clarke (2005) further expands the ambit of grounded theory, which is traditionally based on pragmatism and symbolical interactionism, by integrating discourse analysis and in doing so highlights the importance of (discursive) structures for social action. One of the method's key strengths lies in its ability to 'represent difference(s), complexities, and multiplicities' (Clarke 2005, 23). In addition to this, it takes into account critiques of culture and identity, thereby drawing on key notions of postcolonial thinking.

Utilizing this version of grounded theory 'after the postmodern turn' (Clarke 2005) thus proved to be useful in understanding the context of the indigenous *comunidades* in the Selva Lacandona. Through its neo-pragmatist lens, I was also able to grasp the centrality of the non-human actant *la tierra* [the earth] within the social relations between human beings and nature. This social meaning is expressed in concepts like *lekil kuxlejal*, the Tsotil and Tseltal version of the 'good life' [*buen vivir*] (Schlittler 2012). Furthermore, by focusing on the social worlds³ in the places of origin in the transnational continuum, I was able to understand the indigenous *comunidades* as collective actors. By engaging with Gladys Tzul Tzul's (2016) governmental analysis of communitarian forms of organization, my work reconstructs how indigenous communities can be considered as powerful and, at the same time, ambivalent systems of communal governance. Tzul Tzul (2016) shows that the communitarian practices, like the unpaid collective work to secure the collective infrastructure, can be considered acts of resistance against the liberal state. In the context of anticolonial struggles such acts have always been related to the safeguarding, self-government and sovereignty of a territory (Tzul Tzul 2014). Hence, I position myself against essentialist concepts of 'indigeneity', which locate indigenous communities within a framework of customs and traditions (critically Tzul Tzul 2016) or reduce indigenous articulations to identity politics and conceal the relevance of anti-colonial resistance (Clifford 2001).

3 The concept of social worlds focuses on collective actions and processes of meaning making, or in Howard S. Becker's words people 'doing things together' (cited in Clarke 2005, 109).

PISTEMOLOGIES OF THE SOUTH AND THE CONCEPT OF SENTIPENSAR

In order to translate a decolonial approach in not only epistemological but also methodological terms, we reflected on some of the ways in which my PhD project could be translatable and useful for my research partners. Subsequently, during my fieldwork, I discussed my research questions, participated in and organized workshops with members and visitors of the organizations and finally when I returned to Mexico at the end of 2016, I shared and discussed my preliminary empirical findings with the people involved.

In doing so, I drew on Boaventura de Sousa Santos' (2014) project of 'Epistemologies of the South' (Sousa Santos 2014) as well as Gurinder K. Bhambra (2017) who emphasize that the object of epistemologies of the South is 'to allow oppressed social groups to represent the world as their own and in their own terms, for only [then] will they be able to change it according to their own aspirations' (Bhambra and Santos 2017, 3). Criticizing the epistemology of Western science, Sousa Santos stresses that the dialogue between scholars and social movements should be at the centre of research. He perceives this as a key tool to translate different experiences and understandings of the world into practice (Sousa Santos 2014). Drawing on the collective experiences and problems which derive from social worlds, knowledge not only becomes accessible but also echoes the situated needs and perspectives of the social actors which in academia often remain marginalized or excluded.

However, establishing a dialogue within asymmetrical power relations – a situation which often characterizes the encounter between social movements and social scholars – is a demanding and difficult task. In order to ensure 'that the dialogue does not become a monologue' (Anthias 2002, 282), one has to critically reflect on the conditions of translating different experiences of social struggle within the boundaries of the 'Westernized University' (Grosfoguel, Hernández and Rosen Velásquez 2016) as well as on the limits of applying theoretical knowledge into practice. Within the somewhat limited scope of my dissertation, therefore, I understand this concept especially related to creating dialogic and participative relationships with the people involved in the research.

In carrying out a dialogical-oriented ethnography, it was important for me to compare the processes and results of my research with the perspectives of my research partners and in doing so to shift the perspective and 'not study the subaltern, but study *with* the persons involved in the research' Mato (2000). This process also entailed finding a common language and methodology. In the Americas, participative and activist approaches have a long tradition not only in the social worlds of the academia but also in the context of political practice. In this respect, CIAM and Fray Pedro were not only meeting places in relation to gaining field access. Instead, the context-specific methods of the

organizations shaped my methods and thinking during the fieldwork particularly those methods that shape the self-image of many organizations in touch with social movements and activists such as PAR and popular education (Freire [1972] 2000). These methods became crucial for undertaking my research.

Contrary to positivist research design, both methods also highlight the importance of creating dialogical and participative relations in research and education. In this vein, Fals Borda (1987) expressed the importance of aligning the research to the perspectives and needs of the participants (Fals Borda 1987). He formed the concept of *sentipensar*, which he learnt during his research from and with Colombian peasants. *Sentipensar* means, as Arturo Escobar (2014) summarizes, ‘to feel/think with the territories, cultures and the knowledge of their populations – with their ontologies’ (Escobar 2014, 16, own translation) instead of using decontextualized concepts such as ‘development’, ‘growth’ or ‘economy’. Fals Borda’s (1987) methodology reminds us that the question of decoloniality does not only refer to the theoretical level but has to be reflected also on the methodological dimension regarding practices and methods of research. He points out:

Do not monopolize your knowledge, nor impose arrogantly your techniques, but respect and combine your skills with the knowledge of the researched or grassroots communities, taking them as full partners and co-researchers. Do not trust elitist versions of history and science which respond to dominant interests, but be receptive to counter-narratives and try to recapture them. Do not depend solely on your culture to interpret facts, but recover local values, traits, beliefs, and arts for action by and with the research organizations. Do not impose your own ponderous scientific style for communicating results, but diffuse and share what you have learned together with the people, in a manner that is wholly understandable and even literary and pleasant, for science should not be necessarily a mystery, nor a monopoly of experts and intellectuals. (Fals Borda 1995)

In sum, the collaboration and horizontal negotiation of research with the participants involved, the recording and recognition of counter-hegemonic narratives, the practice of *sentipensar*, that is, developing transcultural sensitivity, as well as the finding of inclusive and context-specific forms of dissemination of research results are fundamental aspects of a dialogical-oriented research process.

REFLEXIVITY AND POSITIONALITY

Dialogue, that is, communication and interaction, is a fundamental component of a qualitative social research practice. However, within asymmetrical power relations, positions in dialogue are not equal and the possibilities for

horizontal exchange and of mutual exchange are not only limited but are also entangled in privilege and power (Chakrabarty 1995). As a result of this, dialogical and activist approaches call for taking into account the (asymmetrical) positionalities of the subjects involved in the process of generating knowledge. In brief, the concept of positionality addresses differences in position, privilege and power in fieldwork (Manning 2018). Reflecting on the social relations within unequal power relations involves implications of intersubjective encounter and identification. In sum, the implication of differences for and into knowledge production becomes an integral part of ethnography.

Feminists and critical scholars have stressed that reflexivity is a useful tool to open up research to more complex understandings of multiple voices and silences (Peake and Trotz 1999). From the beginning to the end of the research process, power relations and politics as well as the researcher's accountability in data collection and interpretation have to be examined critically (Sultana 2007). Social divisions, such as gender, ethnicity, race, class or citizenship, do not only have a direct impact on the social relations but also shaped my 'situated knowledge' and the processes of 'making kin', that is, making relations with human and non-human inhabitants of different social worlds during my research process (Haraway 1988, 2016). The reflection on positionality emphasized the need to find collaborative methods for knowledge dissemination, a process which I will refer to in the next section, even more.

As a white, university-educated scholar, queer, working-class, European person with a German passport, I experienced limited forms of discrimination and disadvantage compared to most of my interview partners. However, I was not the first activist and researcher to come to Chiapas. The Zapatista uprisings that took place in 1994 spurred interest in social movements, human rights issues and the Zapatista's autonomy from scholars, researchers activists and NGOs in the region. Therefore, it was not surprising that most of the people I met during my fieldwork already had experiences with white and Western scholars, researchers and activists and also with non-Western social scientists and activists. Some of my interview partners were social scientists themselves. They knew how to carry out an empirical research embedded in the principles of PAR/popular education and demanded reciprocity and dialogue as conditions for collaboration; therefore, on several occasions I encountered similar or overlapping knowledge settings during my fieldwork. The knowledge produced from ethnography is not just a matter of social worlds of the academia. It can also have an impact on social practices and subjectivities in the contexts of real life/empiricism (Clifford 1986).

Furthermore, what made the reflection on positionality more difficult was the fact that, moving from site to site, my positioning would change constantly. So, it was not surprising when I encountered different experiences of positionality during my fieldwork. As Floya Anthias (2008) points out, positionality can be conceptualized as 'processual' locations 'which are not fixed but are

context-, meaning- and time-related and which therefore involve shifts and contradictions' (Anthias 2008, 5). In consequence, I had to constantly negotiate collaboration and research relations. After staying in the spaces of CIAM and Fray Pedro various times, the people who attended the organizations and programs became familiar with me. In one situation, a group of indigenous women would relate to me as *pobrecita* [poor person] who was not able to speak Spanish properly and whose family was living far away. Addressing me like this showed a sense of compassion with my person who, in this situation, was perceived as vulnerable and alien. During a workshop with Fray Pedro, one of the participants called me a *niña* [girl] and marked my positionality as a learning person. Probably, she also pointed out that I was not married and childless and, therefore, had not achieved the status of a woman in her point of view.

In and on my way to the *comunidades*, however, I stuck out with my height, my white skin colour and passing as a female with short hair wearing pants and expensive hiking boots. My horn-rimmed glasses were a symbol of privileged education and, at the same time, strangeness in the rural contexts, where few individuals would wear spectacles. In other situations, I was identified as part of a human rights brigade or as a doctor. Particularly outside the spaces of CIAM and Fray Pedro, however, I was confronted with moments of hesitation and mistrust, which was connected to my symbolic positioning as a white European person and the related experiences of colonialism, racism and exclusion. Some people would also refuse to participate in my research. Not only attitudes of rejection like not sharing knowledge by not answering specific questions or declining an interview at all but also attitudes of cooperation like negotiating the terms of collaboration revealed the agency of the people I encountered within the situations of research. Trying to establish 'deep coalitions' (Lugones 2003) between differently situated positions means to necessitate difference and to respect the decisions and needs of the other in research.

These experiences of positionality highlight the importance of location and context, which need to be acknowledged in order to establish relations of accountability and trust within positionality which are embedded in relations of difference and hierarchy. If asymmetrical relationships between subjects in the researching position and in the position of the 'researched' subjects cannot be transformed into dialogue, the boundary of insider/outsider cannot be blurred, and collaborative research becomes impossible (Sultana 2007).

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

Agreements and processes

Out of which needs would people be eager to share their personal information and stories with me? Not least because of the tense human rights situation

and precarious working conditions, the people I worked with in the NGOs and social movements had other priorities than to participate in my research project. Having had several experiences with scholars and researchers, people would ask how my research would benefit them and be of use for the knowledge and practice of the respective organizations, and collectives. As a result of their different experiences with previous activists and scholars, they held specific expectations towards my research project and were quite aware of what they wanted and needed. Ranging in multiple locations, I negotiated continually the terms of collaborations and it was through negotiating common working steps and agreements that we were able to establish relations of trust and accountability.

In the scope of my collaborative research with the participants, we made several agreements for collaboration. I facilitated workshops with CIAM and Fray Pedro on different topics via the method of popular education. The people whom I met at CIAM A.C. and the Human Rights Center Fray Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada A.C. ‘helped’ me, as an indigenous woman said, to the degree that I was willing to help them. For example, a collective of women from Comitán asked me to assist them in creating a methodology to systematize their life stories. The following workshop we did together in return became part of my research. Another group of women, whom I met after a workshop at CIAM, requested at the end of an interview that they also wanted to interview me. We arranged an appointment in which the positions of the interviewer would change, and the previously interviewed persons would ask me questions about my personal life, work and the migration situation in Germany and Europe. They not only asked me about information on visa and working requirements but also on travel possibilities to the European Union. The interest in my personal story and background was a crucial point to consolidate a base for working together and create intersubjective relations.

All in all, the possibilities of exchange and collaboration were limited to my temporary stays in Chiapas. The limited temporal resources made long-term and sustainable negotiations of collaboration impossible. Here, the distance between researcher and practice came to light. In the end, what was important was to disseminate the results and knowledge gained during my collaborative process in a way that would be accessible for all the people and organizations that were involved.

Diffusing knowledge

But how can knowledge be disseminated? Due to the University of Kassel’s PhD requirements, it was not possible to write in another language than

German or English. But even if I had written my thesis in Spanish, the format of the written text filled with academic terminology and following the standards of academic writing would have resulted in it being exclusionary for most of my interview partners.

Thus, as Fals Borda (1995) reminds us, it was crucial to find inclusive and context-specific forms of dissemination and in order to do this, I agreed with the members of CIAM and Fray Pedro to organize a workshop based on popular education. The content and results of the workshop, in turn, should be recorded as didactic protocols and translated to Tseltal by the Center. In November 2016, I returned to Chiapas to discuss the preliminary result of my data analysis and with the Indigenous Human Rights Center Fray Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada A.C., we organized a workshop and invited not only the people who participated in my research but also promoters of human rights from the different communities that collaborate with the Center. Due to seasonal conditions – it was harvest time, a fact that was outside of the logic of the academic social world – we were not certain on how many people would attend. In the end, forty-six people, from eight different communities came all the way to Ocosingo to hear, learn and discuss my findings on migration from the perspectives of the people and communities of origin. This was the first defence of my doctoral thesis.

Via popular education (Freire 2000), we interpreted several interview excerpts and discussed preliminary results of my research. As PAR, the ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ (Freire 2000) was developed in the context of social movements and the political struggles against social injustice and for social transformation, it has a long tradition especially in the contexts of the Americas. Roughly summarized, popular education aims to override the hierarchy in the relation between the teacher and learner. In order to deconstruct the difference between theory and practice, non-hegemonic and emancipatory forms of knowledge are supposed to be acquired from the mostly marginalized group’s perspectives.⁴ To do so, we formed small groups in which the participants of the workshop exchanged experiences of migration from the perspectives of the communities of origin. Furthermore, besides the common exchange about my data material, I presented the key findings of my analysis with regard to aspects like motivations for migration, destination of migration, mobility and border regime, as well as the situation of returning

⁴ It is important to mention that this horizontally oriented method of adult education should not be mistaken as a decolonial method per se as its core concepts like ‘awareness-raising’ or ‘democratization’ are rooted within the ‘coloniality of power’ (Quijano 2000). Nonetheless, central considerations of Freire’s and Fals Borda’s approaches regarding the design of a critical and dialogical research process have been fundamentally addressed in decolonial methodologies (Meckesheimer 2013).

migrants. To illustrate the interchange and process, I want to highlight three examples of how the different groups presented their findings:

The advantage that [migration] brings us is that there is money, unity at home and, improvement of the [basic] needs. The problem that [migration] brings us is that sometimes we return dead, without money, with vices, alcohol, drugs and disease. [To improve the situation of migration in the community, we need] to work and to harvest from our land, so that we can improve our lives. (Group 1/Workshop, Ocosingo, 21 October 2016, own translation)

When a migrant returns with money, it can improve the conditions of the community by generating jobs, improving internal trade. Then, you can support people in difficult moments. [The problems that migration can entail are] death, loss of organs, accidents, more poverty, bad habits, addictions. [We can improve the situation of migration in the community by] promoting respect and equality in the community. By giving information about the effects suffered by a migrant. (Group 3/Workshop, Ocosingo, 21 October 2016, own translation)

Another group's conclusion spoke very impressively about the ambivalent situation of migrants returning to their home communities: 'Sometimes they achieve good life and sometimes death' (Group 4/Workshop, Ocosingo, 21 October 2016, own translation). Altogether, the participants of the workshops agreed that migration was neither good nor bad but had become a 'need' to improve life situations at the places of origin. Of particular interest was the question how to make migration more safely for the places of origin, the situation at the border and the legal situation for migrants. Within the communitarian structures of the *comunidades*, migration – from the decision to migrate, to the way of dealing with absence, to the return and the negotiation of belonging – has a collective significance. Nonetheless, not only due to 'the border spectacle' (De Genova 2004, 177), the politics of illegalization and processes of border securitization but also due to the human rights situation in Mexico, migration and the movement between Chiapas and the United States has increasingly become difficult and dangerous. In this context, uncertainty whether migrants will return safely and sanely is rising. The effects of the border regime become more and more palpable in the places of origin. This is especially true in the sad cases when migrants die on the way or 'come back in a coffin' as another group expressed (Group 5/Workshop, Ocosingo, 21 October 2016, own translation).

People concluded that the exchange, information (e.g., about legal and political aspects of the border regime or the human rights situation of migrants) and discussions we had during the workshop have provided them with useful knowledge. For example, one man stated that the discussions helped him to feel confident in his decision whether to migrate or not. In the course of an ongoing migration process and in the context of 'cumulative

causation' (Fussel and Massey 2004), migration has not only become a social practice to ensure to ensure livelihood but sometimes is also considered a rite of passage. In the end, within this discussions and group work processes, the attendees created their own space of reflecting on migration and its meaning and consequences. In other words, they became subjects in the process of knowing (Freire 2000). As multipliers, the people who participated in the workshops later shared and discussed the common findings with their home communities.

CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES FOR COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH: . . . SO THAT THE DIALOGUE DOES NOT BECOME A MONOLOGUE . . .

In the beginning of my chapter, I asked what kind of a dialogical and collaborative research process could be undertaken within the scope of a doctoral thesis that is located in an academic institution. Or, with the words of Daniel Mato (2000), how can a research process be shaped to study with the people and not the people?

In the case of my collaborative research, it would have been unrealistic to find the process related to bring a wider social change – a key element of PAR. Due to the specific logics of academic institutions and the specific demands on a qualification work, Fals Borda's (1995) aforementioned claims are difficult to realize. Academic structural logics that go hand in hand with time pressure/deadlines, individualized patterns of research and the urge for innovation can complicate reflexive and collaborative research projects. In the end, my collaborative research was not only limited by temporal and financial confines. For finalizing my PhD, I had to produce results. While dialogical methods emphasize the importance of the (research) process (before the production of outcomes), I had to produce valid knowledge that in the academic debate would be recognized and contribute to gaining symbolic and cultural capital. In the end, it felt like elaborating two projects: one within the logic of the Western academia and the other within the context of social movements which confronted me with completely different expectations. Even though contributing to a 'new geopolitics of knowledge' (Bhambra 2014) from my positionality and within the scope of my doctoral thesis proved to be a very difficult endeavour, the knowledge produced collectively in the contexts of CIAM and Fray Pedro can contribute to decolonize the practices and perspectives with regard to migrating and leaving the place of origin.

Decolonizing the process of knowledge production is not an easy task, which is especially true for the institutional position of a PhD student. This is a difficult location, as Anika Meckesheimer (2013) states, 'from which to

venture on a research praxis which per definition poses a challenge to hegemonic research practices' (Meckesheimer 2013, 92). Not only the structures of academia but also the 'coloniality of knowledge' (Quijano 2000) embedded into the relations between global South and North complicates the production of an 'intellectual resistance to associated forms of epistemological dominance' (Bhambra 2014, 120).

Critically addressing the power relations that exist between activists and scholars, Subcomandante Marcos (2008), the anterior political spokesman of the Zapatista movement, complained about the *coyotes de solidaridad* [coyotes of solidarity] (Subcomandante Marcos 2008). The term *coyote* is used in Mexico for the exploitative practices of coffee traders or migrant smugglers. By applying this concept to Western social activists and scholars who would come to Chiapas, gather knowledge and experience and never return or disseminate, Marcos highlighted the level of epistemic violence. He shows that also solidary and well-meaning projects can fall into this trap, that is, when individuals gather cultural capital in academic contexts using the specific knowledge resources of social movements or marginalized groups. Not least because of this fact, Daniel Mato (2000) claims that decolonial-oriented research projects, if not able to study with the people, should alternatively study the hegemonic articulations of power and disseminate this knowledge. Related to my project, if I would not have been able to conduct a collaborative research this would have meant to analyse the dynamics of the border and migration regime and share the information which could contribute to make migrants less vulnerable. Nevertheless, the focus on the perspectives of the people staying at home in the communities of origin demonstrated the importance of creating conditions for a life in dignity [*una vida digna*] and thus to create alternatives to mobilities embedded in the 'coloniality of migration' (Gutiérrez Rodríguez 2018). From this decolonial perspective, the demand for the freedom of movement as it is often articulated within activist contexts of the global North can be complemented with the right to stay and live a *lekil kuxlejal* (Schlittler 2012) with its far-reaching and anticolonial consequences as the example of the Zapatista autonomy in Chiapas shows since 1994.

Although I discussed with the people involved in my research how my research could be useful for them and tried to find collaborative ways, there were several requests I couldn't fulfil which demonstrated the limits of my collaborative research. One of the challenges for the local NGOs and human rights organizations was their precarious situation. Seeing that CIAM and Fray Pedro lost the major part of their funding, which forced them to suspend parts of their activities, while I worked at a German University, was one of the moments when the power structures and privileges became more than obvious. Not only in terms of material resources, I could not comply with the

expectations and demands of my interview partners. However, when people asked for legal advice during my fieldwork, I was able to connect them to the Indigenous Human Rights Center and in other instances such as cases of territorial conflicts or gender and gendered violence I connected them to CIAM. At other moments, expectations about useful skill-sharing would diverge to such an extent that the hierarchical relation between research and practice made dialogue and collaboration impossible. This experience also highlighted the need to be transparent and honest about the possibilities and limits for collaboration and in doing so not to raise undue expectations.

Nonetheless, within the scope of my doctoral research, during the workshops of popular education, we could generate knowledge that was both ‘valid and vital to the well-being’ (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire 2003, 11) to the individuals and communities I collaborated with. In the end, the human rights centre invited me to become part of further collaborative research. Or in the words of the female participant of the workshop in Ocosingo, ‘Ya puede volver la niña’ [the girl can come back].

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Chapter 8

Intermezzo II – Methodology

Mariam Popal, Gurminder K. Bhambra, Manuela Boatcă, Julia Suárez-Krabbe, Olivia U. Rutazibwa,
Robbie Shilliam and Maria Eriksson Baaz

Mariam Popal: Coming from Comparative Literature and Comparative Studies, I would say that I work within texts and contexts. Yet, what we do as artists as well as scientists, whether we work in the humanities or the social sciences, is always already a kind of reading and expressing ourselves, and always a shuttling between reading – ourselves, the world – and a giving back, going back to ourselves and the world. I think what may be important is to see how we work and how we could deconstruct forms of power structures. So the core aspect of decolonization for me would be: How do we perceive and how do we come to terms with dominance and power. And the question where our own connections and affiliations with structures of power are, and, how we are privileged by them, and in which ways we are – even without our knowledge – dominant regarding others.

Gurminder K Bhambra: The first thing I'd want to do is to take issue with the idea that the tools are the master's. Who claims that the tools are the master's? Within my work I have never made a distinction between what is presented as Western social science and other types of social science. I have rather tried to think about the ways in which particular intellectual genealogies claim concepts for themselves and thereby exclude both the historical instances of other places and other people's thinking about these sorts of issues. And then they have tried to present these concepts as gifts to the rest of the world. I just don't think that tools – whether they are social scientific or material – can have an ethnicity or a race in that sense.

Manuela Boatcă: It is a very important point to make how to go beyond the abstract idea of what is wrong with the others' practice and how to apply it to yourself. The way I go about it is to think about what and whom I am excluding when I am doing research, when I am teaching, when I am writing. That may be the way that I write about my own epistemic positioning.

I used to think that just writing about the fact that I was born in Romania and have a more Eastern European perspective – of course also a regional construction – was enough as a counterpart to having a Western European or a U.S.-American perspective. But of course I have to say that I am a white, middle-class person born in the capital of Romania, which is really not the same thing as for many others. That is one way of decolonizing the epistemic positioning itself. But on the other hand putting together syllabi for my classes: what things should be included in order to have a representation of the work being done out there and being done for decades. That is maybe not the one published in the most visible publishing houses or with the most prestigious presses but just work that is relevant for our understanding.

Julia Suárez-Krabbe: There are many different kinds of takes on decolonial methodology, but the ones that I think are more constructive – and at the same time destructive, because they destroy the master's house – are taking seriously the different positions we have in the world. It is not the same to be an African-American man, to be a Mestiza, Latina woman in Denmark like me that passes as white, to being a 'native Dane'. From thinking seriously this locus of enunciation, we can actually start to understand diversity in ways that do not replicate the neoliberal logics of multiculturalism. One thing that is at the core of these decolonial methodologies is that you don't put racism aside, you don't banalize racism, you don't banalize imperialism and colonialism, but you take them seriously as constitutive of these different places of enunciation, as constitutive of diversity. We need to understand how we are also constituted through colonialism, racism and so on, before we can really thoroughly start to articulate how we are going to change this. It will not be the same that is required of me as a Latina than it is of an African Colombian intellectual or activist, because we have different legacies that we also need to take into account, to conceptualize and to deal with.

Olivia U Rutazibwa: The post- or decolonial lens is often mistaken as a topic-specific choice that we make. So in that sense I would say, whatever you study, the elements in post- and decolonial thinking could be applied to about anything. Even if you live in a tiny village somewhere in the middle of Western Europe. There is a lot of the thinking around a place like that, depending on what you are studying, for which a de- or postcolonial approach could be useful. The reason for that is that I do think that post- and decolonial approaches fundamentally come down to really facing straight in the eye the ideas around extreme power inequality and oppression. To more or less explicit extents, a lot of the social sciences that we do is to try to understand things in the world and often they are related to issues of domination. So post- and decolonial approaches do not just highlight a particular moment in history to then explain everything in the present. This is a part of it and is often a starting point to make it tangible. I would say – and of course we have

to try to be specific and not just generalize – that as an ethos of research, the post- and the decolonial is a useful tool for whatever you study.

When I was thinking about the question of whether it is important to move ‘beyond the master’s tools’, I was wondering whether there wouldn’t be another question to ask before. And that is obviously whether it is really the problem of the master’s tools and that we need to check them out, or whether we just have a range of tools that then are used in a certain way for master purposes. So, whether we need to get rid of the tools or need to think more about the purposes and why they are being used, to what end. I wouldn’t say that I would choose either of the two. But I think when we look at certain methodologies or if we look at classifications, interviews, theory formation abstraction, I would say that it is not necessarily beforehand that all these things are being used in a colonial way, or by definition can only be used in a colonial way. But we should need to try to make that distinction. I would say that academia is a tool in itself. It is really important to recognize the coloniality in academia as it exists today, but at the same time this also means that we do not just have to vilify and walk away from it and do something else. Because there is still a lot of power in it. We might also need to think through the idea that power in itself is not something that is bad, but to think of how we use power and to what end. In that sense, one of the reasons why I enjoy being an academic – apart from reading and writing and getting paid for it – is that you get a platform with which you can do things. You need power to do things and then for me moving beyond the master’s tools or the idea of tools being used in a colonial way is that you need to use the tools for really clear anti-colonial struggle.

Robbie Shilliam: To me, the ethics of research, the ethics of knowledge cultivation is the most important thing. One of the terms people use these days is epistemic injustice. And that’s a fundamental part of the colonial system, what people in Latin America call the coloniality of knowledge. And epistemic injustice relates to this basic division of the world between the knowers and the known. So the knowers know themselves and everybody else, therefore they can rule. The known, which are in the majority, are supposed to not being able to know themselves adequately, and therefore they can’t rule themselves or anybody else. They have to be ruled over. So very concrete, material systems of violence, extraction, appropriation, they are all based on an epistemic injustice, which is dividing the world into the knowers and the known. The academy is absolutely complicit in that system. So most of our bodies of thought gain their integrity and their sanctity by saying that they are able to know themselves and others. They’re adequate knowledge. But these other knowledges, they are data, they are folklore, they are myths, they are tradition, they are narrative, but they are not generally useful knowledge. Some of my work is about actually getting rid of that distinction, and actually saying that every community which constitutes itself as such has

living knowledge traditions which are useful to themselves and generally edifying. That doesn't mean to say that there aren't contradictions, intentions, impairs and hierarchies. That's everywhere. The deeper first-order problem is not that. The deeper first-order problem is the assumption that there are some communities who have no living knowledge traditions. For example, we can even say: how did Marx learn about poverty? Well, philosophically he learnt about poverty coming out of Kant and Hegel or that kind of tradition, but practically he learnt about poverty through Engels. Engels does the ethnographies of the working class in Manchester, and through that Marx understands suddenly that poverty is something politically common and real and has to be dealt with. Engels – where does he get his ideas from? He gets his ideas from the working class. What is the magic which suddenly makes it such that Marx can say that we as the communists lead thought on the proletariat? When in actual fact most probably the inspirations for that aren't coming so much from Kant and Hegel – that's the philosophical vinaigrette which it's dressed up in, but they learnt from the living knowledge traditions of the people which they do the ethnography from. So my thing is to say, well then, how would you humble Marxism? How would you actually get it to relate to these living knowledge traditions? In principle, on a horizontal basis. That's not to romanticize these living knowledge traditions or say that they are correct, it has nothing to do with it. Once you start to do that, then what you have to do is humble the university itself. The university is no longer the new priests, the keeper of the flame of enlightenment. The ones where you have to go to in order to edify yourself and to understand the world. The university then has to actually integrate itself into the communities which it serves, which surround it, which could be local and could be global, and it has to, at least in principle, open its doors on the assumption of the horizontality in terms of epistemic integrities. It doesn't come as the church comes to dispense light, it actually comes in relation.

Maria Eriksson Baaz: There are quite some similarities between postcolonial methods and feminist methods. The efforts to decolonize methods are quite similar to what feminists have been doing for ages. And the problem is still the same, I would say. The discussions also tend to be too technical, such as the theme of decolonizing the interview in this conference. The interview is the least problematic part in a normal research project because that is the only part where actually research subjects have some kind of influence. If they have something they want to bring forward they can do that in the interview, if it's not pre-formatted. What we really need to do in terms of decolonizing is to involve research subjects in formulating the research question. That that is where interests often clashes. And then of course the interpretation and the writing. So, it has to be the whole process. That is what I mean by decolonizing methods, but very few do that and I haven't done it myself either.

So, decolonizing the whole process means that we actually even define the research question together. What is it that is most important for you? And then we work together in the whole process, with whatever method you use. And in your analysis as well. And I haven't done that.

Everyone needs to recognize that going through such a process means that you probably have to let go of your own research interests. I give you an example from the research I conducted with my colleague Maria Stern. It was an analysis of external interventions in relation to the rape of women in the Congo – a classical example of the quest to save the brown woman from the brown man: really stereotyped, failure to listen to the women, exoticizing and so on. So there were a lot of problems of racism in these interventions that we wanted to highlight. But when we talked to the women's organizations and the women victims, many did not see this as their main concern. And some raised the problem that voicing the critique could actually diminish much needed funding. So, when we discussed with the women's organizations, some thought that, yes, you can write this, but some were quite reluctant. And if we had gone to them before starting the research and asked 'Okay, what can we do? What should the research project focus on?' they said they would not pick the post-colonial critique because that is not what they feel really affects them. Rather some of them emphasized how these racist descriptions and politics calling upon old images of Africa are actually giving them quite a lot of funding which is acutely needed in the situation.

And I give you another example of a more recent project which is on army wives in the Congo. It was analyzing the governing of army wives by the military, so adopting a Foucauldian governmentality perspective. As always, I tried to have the interviews as open as possible. As I said, that is the only way in which research subjects can actually talk about what they want to talk about, where they can drive their own agenda. We did that and the interviews were quite long and I would say that 75 per cent the time in the interviews they were talking about their extreme poverty. In one interview, a woman pointed to the bed and showed her dead son after the interview was done, asking for a funeral contribution. Her five-year-old dead son was lying in the bed. While I was asking questions about how she and other army wives were governed by the armed forces from a critical military perspective. So what do you do with that? Because telling the story of their extreme poverty and hardships was not part of my research project? In this case, and in many others we tried to deal with it by writing something separate on that.

That is why it is so difficult with academia, because our interests with post-colonial perspectives and so-called advanced theory are often in the way of decolonizing research and methods. I am no better than anyone else here.

My main way of dealing with it, to get these concerns that do not fit in fancy academic publications, is to also engage in policy publications. Which is also problematic because if you engage too much in the policy world you can also easily lose control of your research and it is used in all different ways. But I still think that this is one way of trying at least to do research in a bit more responsible way.

Part III

DECOLONIZING ACADEMIA

Chapter 9

'They Call It "White Guilt: The Module"': Reflections on Teaching Postcolonial and Decolonial Geographies

Andrew Davies and Kathy Burrell

For the past five years, we have taught a module together called 'Postcolonial Geographies' at the University of Liverpool. Our course is a reinterpretation of a module that had been dormant for a few years due to staffing and curriculum changes, and we were keen to reintroduce post/decolonial studies to the Geography curriculum. The module sits in the final year of the three-year undergraduate programmes in the Department of Geography and Planning. It is an 'optional' module (i.e., one which is not compulsory to the programme, but rather is one of a range of options students can choose from) but has always attracted healthy student numbers, with an average of between sixty and seventy students opting to take it over the five years.

This module feels particularly timely at present, as debates about decolonization are appearing more prominently, and with more urgency, in the public realm in the United Kingdom. Drawing on academic work which has called for more attention to be paid to the colonial practices and epistemologies that underpin much academic knowledge as it is produced in the global North (e.g., Maldonado-Torres 2007; Mignolo 2011; Quijano 2007), there are now increasing numbers of, often student-led, movements which are challenging the very practice of teaching and learning in the academy. In the United Kingdom, there have been ongoing calls to 'decolonize' the curriculum over the past few years (see, e.g., the NUS 'Why Is My Curriculum White' campaign which started in 2014,¹ Hussain 2014) – part of a wider global movement towards decolonial thinking which has been established for a much longer period, including links back to Freire's critical pedagogy (see Walsh 2015). This decolonial approach calls for a radical change to how we understand the production of knowledge. For example, De Lisssovov (2010), in a

1 See <https://www.nus.org.uk/en/news/why-is-my-curriculum-white/>.

philosophical intervention into teaching practice, has argued that one path that allows students and educators to begin decolonizing their understanding of the world is to think ‘globally’ about how differences between communities in our present global world are often shaped by historical practices of domination and inequality. To do this requires a curriculum which challenges Eurocentric discourses, encouraging students (and teachers) to do more than learn about other places, but rather to understand ‘the processes of material and cultural conquest that construct some places as “peripheral” and some as “central”, and . . . decentring the author[s] of this history’ (De Lissovoy, 287).

Within Geography, an academic discipline which in the United Kingdom has a history synonymous with the colonial practices of the British Empire, this approach also appears to have been gathering momentum – in 2017 the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) (with the Institute of British Geographers [IBG]) Annual International Conference theme was ‘Decolonising Geographical Knowledges’. This, given the RGS’s past as an institution with incredibly close ties to the imperial project, proved controversial with a number of geographers who engaged with post- or decolonial ideas (Esson et al. 2017). However, the conference theme did open up space for critical engagement with questions about Geography’s continued colonial tension. For example, a workshop run by the Race, Culture & Equality Working Group of the RGS-IBG asked questions about how poor the discipline has traditionally been at encouraging Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students to consider Geography as a subject at higher education, as well as urging a much more critical self-reflection by geographers on how we continue to reproduce oppressive structures in our teaching and research practices.²

It is in this context that we found ourselves teaching ‘postcolonial’ geographies to our students. Undertaking this role has been demanding, in different ways for both of us, and this chapter gives us a chance to reflect back on the past five years. Crucially, this is not an act of ‘naval-gazing’ or agonizing over our own practices, but instead speaks to the very real challenges of attempting to introduce post/decolonial ideas into a curriculum, and putting some of these theories into practice in the classroom. In particular, we want to reflect on the ways in which this teaching is always freighted by the positionalities of the teachers and the students, which are further constrained by the wider learning environment of the university. Second, we as geographers are interested in the wider connections the module makes to the daily lives of the students – in particular, how we can utilize the city in which we teach as a learning space for students to take on some of the ideas we talk about in the classroom and begin to apply them to spaces and places they encounter

2 See <https://raceingeography.org/2017/07/21/race-event-beyond-the-talk-decolonising-teaching-and-research-in-geography/>.

every day, but may often ignore or disregard. This approach, and our efforts to decolonize more generally, requires us to invest deeply in this teaching, necessitating an ongoing care and reflection about what we do as teachers, as well as what, and where, we teach; this, we feel, brings with it the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to this decolonial impetus, and offers genuine potential for students to learn.

TEACHER POSITIONALITY AND DIFFERENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

There is a rich pedagogical heritage already established for doing decolonial work in university teaching, from which our module draws. Working through a decolonial approach to pedagogy, for example, has been particularly significant in North and Latin America where it has been used to think about how students from indigenous communities, whose epistemologies are often radically different to dominant Eurocentric knowledges, are treated by, and work within, the confines of formal academia. Many solutions are now proposed by academics attempting to foster dialogue across the differences between individuals in the classroom. For instance, Gill and White (2013) argue for the concept of the ‘transcultural’ (drawing from Mignolo), as a potential way to encourage students to think about their position in relation to their classmates. Gill and White argue that, by creating the classroom/learning space as a ‘contact zone’, and encouraging controlled forms of personal narratives to be constructed by students, it is possible to learn about the difference between individuals without that difference being subsumed into a relationship of dominance. This approach, considered from a situation of small classroom sizes with a very diverse student cohort, could work very well. However, it is something that is challenging in our current teaching, and our Postcolonial Geographies module especially – where Geography as a discipline (and Geography at Liverpool) has traditionally attracted a low number of BAME students (see Desai 2017). Calling on those few students to tell very personal narratives in a classroom, where student numbers are often close to 100, is likely to be more harmful than beneficial, especially for students who may already feel uneasy about the university environment as a space of ‘colonial’ knowledge – something we will return to shortly.

Our positionality, as tutors, is also fundamental in shaping the classroom environment, the discussions we have and how we present knowledge. Noxolo’s (2017, 1) argument that ‘decolonial writing emerges from a different positionality’ is as important to teaching as it is to writing. Through this module we wrestle with our position as – again, more typical in Geography (Desai 2017) – white, middle-class lecturers. If we are to take decolonizing

the curriculum seriously, this position cannot be unacknowledged; just as Daigle and Sundberg (2017, 4) recognize how their positionality impacts teaching and research, we need to do the same. The significant body of literature on whiteness (see Nayak 2007) reminds us that when we teach our colour is always relevant, embodying a position of privilege and domination (Linke 1999) that we are in danger of forgetting in our inhabitation of it (see Ahmed 2004). It is our responsibility to ‘unlearn our privilege’ (Landry and Maclean 1996) in the classroom (as well as outside of it); and if we do not try to do this, we cannot also expect our white students to attempt this too – indeed sometimes the module requires us to do this together. So this means, practically, resisting teaching with a ‘methodological whiteness’ (Bhambra 2017), and questioning our decisions as we go – again, something we will discuss in more detail shortly. It also means not shirking this responsibility because it is intrinsically difficult or uncomfortable. As Spivak (1990, 62) argues, it is not enough to declare whiteness a reason for not speaking; the key is to use this position to challenge, and to make room for other knowledges at every opportunity, rather than let that whiteness invade the space of others (Puwar 2004).

So, if we reflect on our own positionalities properly here, what do we find? While whiteness carries the cloak of power, it is no more a homogenous, uncontested, identity than blackness (see Roediger 2006). It is important to acknowledge straight away that while neither of us have personal or family experience of the kinds of violent racisms we investigate on the module, our histories have still reflected and co-constituted the wide reach of British imperialism, perpetuating and internalizing coloniality in different ways. It is our own positionalities that drive us to teach this module, and these are made more or less visible at various times during the course. This is also a deliberate strategy of ours to show how all of our personal lives are entwined with coloniality, and by opening up to the students about our personal histories, and presents, we hope to get them to reflect upon their own connections to the colonial past and present.

Andy’s positionality

One of my key considerations in teaching this course is how, as a white, heterosexual man, I embody certain dominant and colonial narratives to the students taking the module. I attempt to destabilize this in the course introduction, where I reflect on my own upbringing and what aspects of my own identity have been ‘colonized’. This is thrown most sharply into relief when I talk to the students about my Welsh identity. In the UK context, to be Welsh is to be in a subordinate position to a dominant English culture, which to some is a relationship of ‘internal colonialism’ (Hechter 1977). For example, Liverpool, the city we live and teach in, was responsible for an

act of ‘resource colonialism’ when the municipality flooded the Tryweryn Valley in north Wales in the 1950s and 1960s to provide fresh water for the city. In doing so, one of the last ‘Welsh-only’ speaking villages in Wales was flooded, and much of the Welsh nationalist politics of the later twentieth century traces itself to this act of seeming colonialism and Liverpool formally apologized for this in 2005. Welsh identity is strongly associated with the Welsh language or, more often, the Welsh accent when speaking English. Often lampooned in popular culture (see, e.g., the award-winning comedy show *Gavin and Stacey*, focusing on a long-distance relationship between a woman from South Wales and a man from Essex), the lilting nature of the Welsh accent is something that I don’t possess, or at least not strongly enough to be recognized as ‘Welsh’ by the majority of people. This is because my mother, who herself has a strong South Wales Valleys accent, impressed on myself and my brother the need to speak unaccented English because, in her words, ‘English people think Welsh people are stupid because of our accent’. Thus, from an early age, I was taught to constrain my spoken voice, saying ‘Hi Mum’ rather than the more strongly Welsh ‘Hiya Mam’, and often being picked out in school as ‘talking posh’ by fellow students, and often being chosen to read or narrate key parts in school plays because of my ‘nice’ unaccented voice by teachers. My lack of an accent also means that it comes as a surprise to many students on this module that I am Welsh. I use this example to frame how we are all affected by colonial structures of power in various ways, and while I embody certain colonial privileges, my embodied voice has been conditioned by the colonial relations of power that exist within the structures of the United Kingdom. When teaching, it is important to make it clear that this example is not the same as the structural and often racialized violences that were and are inflicted upon colonized peoples in other parts of the world. However, it does serve to ‘bring home’ ideas about colonialism so that it is not something that is always ‘inflicted upon’ people in other parts of the world. This is also a useful jumping-off point to our classroom discussions about Fanon and the importance of language in *Black Skin, White Masks*, which form a key reading early on in the module.

A second point I raise during the module is my experience as a volunteer teacher in India after my undergraduate Geography degree. I graduated in 2002, and thanks to the particular staffing arrangements in that institution, postcoloniality or decoloniality was missing from the curriculum. In India, I was aware of the various legacies left by British colonialism in the world, and wanted to redress them by undertaking voluntary work in the global South. This led me to a six-month placement teaching non-formal education in a slum in a South Indian city. It was here, from my own naive perspective, where I began to develop a certain amount of postcolonial critique of development, way before I’d encountered any reading by the likes of Routledge

(2008), Koopman (2008) or Escobar (2012) which I encountered later on. What disturbed me most during this time was the implicit colonialist assumptions by many development workers who I encountered in this time. I remember one individual making statements about what tasks ‘Indians’ were or weren’t to be relied upon to do based on a number of essentialist conventions. What particularly struck me was how this person did this while also making assumptions that they were liberal and anticolonial. For instance, they often decried the British atrocities and widespread cultural destruction that were inflicted on Delhi in the aftermath of the 1857 rebellion against British rule. It was this emergent critique of the internal contradictions of these development workers that made me reconsider ‘development’ and instead turn back towards academic study, eventually leading towards my current research focus on anticolonialism, and this whole experience was (and is) one of the key personal motivations for teaching on the module. Talking to the students about this example allows us to think about how pervasive a lot of ‘Western’ assumptions about the global South are, and how these can often be found being practised by people who are supposedly doing work to counter them. I stress that this is not to blame the development worker in India or to target them, but rather talk to the students about how pervasive colonialist and orientalist imaginaries continue to be. Talking in this way, I think, allows the students to see how ‘decolonization’ is not as simple as flicking a switch, but is rather an ongoing, and often challenging, process of self-reflection about our actions in the world and their impact upon others. I also stress that this is something that we are doing as staff. The practise of ongoing self-reflection is something which we are both constantly talking to each other about during the teaching of this module. Every cohort of students reacts differently to our syllabus, and thinking together about how we are often challenging some deep-seated beliefs among our students is a key method by which we both assess the effectiveness of our teaching, but also support each other as a module teaching team.

Kathy’s positionality

My background and history is relevant to our module in different ways, but equally entwined with colonial histories. My maternal granddad, as a docks foreman, was posted to Malta and Singapore for periods across the 1940s to early 1960s; my mum therefore spent much of her formative years in these two countries. Family folklore posits this time not only as a period of excitement and adventure but also something which has brought a legacy of subsequent displacement. My mum still misses Malta, several decades later, and has always struggled to feel ‘at home’ in the United Kingdom. The colonial presence my family embodied is understood and remembered in seemingly

benign ways and commemorated in enduring material cultures in the home (the Japanese musical bell, bought in Singapore in the early 1960s, lovingly mended, stored, and found out, displayed and ‘pulled’ each Christmas, now proudly passed down to me), but the weight of coloniality is there in the photo slides of the servants who worked for them in Singapore, and in stories of unrest being targeted against the British dockworkers before they left. Their colonial presence was complicated – it was a white working-class, rather than middle-class, English culture they took with them to Malta and Singapore, manifested in the stubborn attachment to Sunday roasts on hot days, but it was colonial nevertheless. Sharing this past in that introductory session is important. Theoretically, it helps establish one of the module’s key themes of unsettling notions of core and periphery. British history is as much about Malta, Singapore, and India, Nigeria and Kenya, as it is about ‘Britain’ narrowly defined. These pasts are important in how our presents are shaped. It also helps to complicate understandings of coloniality in practice – something that ordinary lives were impacted upon on both sides (see Webster 2005), with clear classed and gendered dimensions (Blunt 1999). British colonial history is not something that happened ‘over there’, to ‘other people’.

Like Andy, I also have a further motivation for teaching this module which I share in our first session. As a parent of an inquisitive, history-loving, child, I have had to confront all over again the way we teach and encounter British history here in the United Kingdom – in schools, in children’s books, in museums. My daughter’s passion for the CBBC programme ‘Hetty Feather’, about a Victorian foundling trying to find her mother, led to an especially keen interest in this era of history, and one I was keen, in turn, to nurture. But how could I ‘teach’ Victorian history without teaching about empire? How could I explain the Industrial Revolution without talking about how dependent this was on colonial ‘resources’? And, more to the point, how could the books we were reading together fail to make this connection completely? Living in Liverpool, too, raises similar issues. At what point does the weekend excursion to the Albert Dock start to confront the heavy history of the coloniality right there at its heart? My attempts to decolonize in my teaching are mirrored in, and partly inspired by, my parenting.

So how we work through these positionalities, and our whiteness, is key to our interactions with our students. It is especially important that we make room for the voices and experiences of our BAME students, and strive to create safer spaces which allow discussions on personal experiences, reflections and perspectives. As noted, with large student numbers this can be difficult, but it is not impossible. One example recently on our module has been the tutor-led instigation of a critical discussion about the images used in teaching. As white teachers we have become increasingly uncomfortable about some of the images we show to illustrate the racism of colonial powers and discourse.

Representational geographies may be out of fashion in the geographical literature more broadly, but in ‘real life’ representations have unparalleled reach and influence (Doboš 2017, 3). There is a large, and easily accessible, visual archive available to the teacher of coloniality – in particular colonial advertising (Ramamurthy 2003), but also highly racialized images, art, cartoons, photographs (Pinder 2013). What do we do when, as white lecturers, we show images of black bodies – and the most violent and offensive images/adverts/cartoons do seem to be of black bodies – being violated or caricatured in some way? Fanon (1967 [1952]) was particularly angry about the French advertising of the ‘Banania’ drink, and the way Senegalese servicemen, men who had fought for France in the world wars, were depicted. Is it OK to show these adverts again now, for teaching purposes, or are we in danger of, as Donadey (2000) has argued, perpetuating the original violences of the image when we re-disseminate them?

We want to use images like this to unsettle our students, to get them to see and understand the racial languages at work, but what if this makes our BAME students uncomfortable, even just being in the room? What if this negates the safety of the space, letting the violence of the images in? There are some knowledges and perspectives which we cannot, as white teachers, know. So we asked. We opened up a discussion, to all the students in the room – there are images out there which we feel are pedagogically important, but which are highly offensive and disturbing. We asked them whether they thought we should show them. And the results were so significant, for cementing that trust with the students, and for confronting this issue of whiteness and lecturer and student positionality rather than trying to ignore it. In the lecture break, one of our BAME students spoke to Kathy. She had discussed this with other students of colour in the lecture. They wanted her to show the images. They wanted her, even in her position as a white lecturer, to show them because it was important that the pain they conveyed was acknowledged. The other students had to see what the reality of racism and coloniality was, and still is. To draw on Césaire (1955, 2000, 41), showing these images offered inarguable *proof* of colonization and the savagery, not of the colonized, but of colonizer who, in inflicting this violence, had ‘transformed *himself* into an animal’. The racism was not new – they did not feel newly victimized by what these images showed, but this was an opportunity to shift that perspective, to get the white students to understand what racism does. We will keep asking the students whether we should show these kinds of images, every year, because this is not a position to take for granted. But this example goes to the heart of this module, and the heart of attempting to decolonize in the classroom; white lecturers are not all knowing, and learning is a two-way process. When we are teaching about racism and coloniality, there are different perspectives in the room which everybody needs to learn from.

This positionality is relevant for classed discussions and how we teach certain topics as well. It was in the year of the Brexit referendum result that Postcolonial Geographies was billed ‘white guilt: the module’ by one of our students. Once again, this required us to reflect on our position in the classroom. Were we teaching about Brexit, so relevant for coloniality race *and* class in the United Kingdom (see Burrell et al. 2019; Virdee and McGeever 2017), from a particularly classed and privileged perspective, indulging a latent imperial guilt (see Baldwin 2017, 330) by implicitly aligning with an arguably neoliberal position on the movement of people? Were we also in danger of setting ourselves up as being white middle-class arbiters of knowledge, indirectly telling some of our students that they were ‘wrong’ in being sympathetic to some of the ‘Leave’ arguments about migration? Where would we have to draw the line, between encouraging healthy dissent and discussion, but filtering out any overt prejudice in our teaching spaces? This example again underlines the weight of responsibility we carry when teaching these topics, and the reflections we have to consider in our efforts to decolonize and include at the same time. The second year of teaching about Brexit has seen us take more care in some of the framing of the topic, certainly not underplaying the racial and colonial significance of it as a development, but being more precise in our references to positions espoused by the Leave campaign, and recognizing the heterogeneity of the Leave, as well as the Remain, positions. We have learnt, once again, from and with, the students.

DESIGNING A DECOLONIAL CURRICULUM

At its core, our module is about encouraging students to consider how past colonial structures and racisms persist into the present; the entire curriculum is based upon prompting students to think about the legacies of colonialism across the world, and challenging them to think about some of these global narratives proposed by De Lisssovoy (2010). We face two practical, and related, issues with this. First, with all the evidence of coloniality in the world, how do we decide what to include in the curriculum, balancing our expertise and interest with the need to decolonize as much as possible? This is made even more challenging by the limited time we have during the module to teach – the semester at Liverpool is twelve teaching weeks, with roughly two hours of teaching time per week, so we are always limited here – for instance, due to our respective areas of expertise, Africa and Latin America are covered in much less depth in the module. And second, in a world where racism and coloniality seem more relevant than ever, is the need to keep up to date – our lectures have to be revised each year (Brexit, Trump, Charlottesville), sometimes even on the day; we have to be very responsive to current

events and developments and be able to incorporate them in our wider curriculum framing, without diluting our core focus in doing so. As a result, in designing our curriculum we broadly split the module into four, impossible to fully demarcate, thematic parts; an overview and introduction to postcolonial and decolonial theory; legacies in the colonized world; the postcolonial ‘west’; and, through assessment, film showings and fieldwork, the postcolonial analysis of cultural texts and spaces.

In the introductory sections of the module, we discuss how the ideas of this module are radical and provocative – discussing how the intent of decolonial writing is to destabilize the status quo, and that this will necessarily involve challenging some of our long-held convictions. However, we also have to lay a lot of preparatory groundwork down, so ‘key thinkers’ such as Frantz Fanon, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Walter Mignolo and others are introduced to the students. There is a danger here of inscribing these thinkers with a certain hegemonic weight as ‘the key thinkers’ for the module. However, this is balanced against the foundational nature of much of their work, alongside the fact that many of these names are unfamiliar to students at the outset of the course. We do, to some extent, have to provide a core of post/decolonial knowledge for students to work within (and potentially against).

In discussing the colonized world and the legacies of colonialism, we not only explore issues related to global history but also examine the continued impact of colonialism in these areas. In terms of histories, we explore how colonialism shaped geopolitical patterns and forms, establishing networks and relationships across space (this is a Geography course after all!). Crucially, we explore how imperialism was not as clear-cut and orderly as many, particularly those who are nostalgic for empire, would claim. Boundaries between ‘core and periphery’ and ‘colonizer/colonized’ were fractured and haphazard, and far from being an orderly process of government, we look at how imperial rule was often chaotic and irrational, and how our interpretations of imperial/colonial space have shifted over time (Lester 2006). In addition, we explore how anticolonial struggles occurred – showing how ‘the colonized’ were not simply subjects of empire, but actively colluded, resisted and reshaped their circumstances in relation to colonial authority. Here, we discuss, among other things, Tibetan anticolonial networks stretching across the globe (Davies 2009), watch Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* and discuss how the enslaved are represented in the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool. We also explore how imperialism had impacts on social structures in colonized areas, and how this has had numerous unintended consequences – discussing things like colonial impacts on caste and the caste system (Dirks 2001) and the dissemination of sports like football in the British invasion of Tibet in 1903/04 (McKay 2001).

The ‘postcolonial west’ lectures allow us to restate the intermeshing of the colonized and colonizer’s worlds, collapsing, where we can, the divide between ‘here’ and ‘over there’. The lectures give us the opportunity to explore British, European and U.S. contexts; Australia, Canada and Ireland are, by necessity, all omitted. The material on Britain looks at representations of empire in London (Gilbert and Driver 2000); at amnesia and record ‘loss’ surrounding British colonial atrocities (Sato 2017); at the partial commemoration of colonial wartime troops; at the postcolonial spaces of curry houses (Buettner 2008) and the suburbs (Nayak 2010); and allows for a reframing of Britain as an historically diverse society, but one where immigration policy has become increasingly racialized since the early twentieth century (Spencer 2002). We read about Sam Selvon’s *Lonely Londoners*, and we watch films about Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*, and the precarious, liminal existence of migrant London, navigating an already ‘hostile environment’, in *Dirty Pretty Things*. We try to include these different voices and experiences, to see London and the United Kingdom through different eyes. And yes, we talk about Brexit, assessing the role that Gilroy’s (2004) quintessentially British postcolonial melancholia helped to shape some of the Leave campaign discourses.

In our discussions of postcolonial Europe, we take as our starting point the idea that modern European history is fundamentally about coloniality. We acknowledge German atrocities in Namibia, interrogate Scandinavian whiteness and ongoing settler colonialisms (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2016), consider the alleged ‘postcolonial bonus’ of colonial migrants in the Netherlands (Oostindie 2011) and we focus on France making connections between discourses about Algerians in France over time, *The Battle of Algiers*, the work of Frantz Fanon, and high-profile ‘issues’ surrounding veiling, sport and *les banlieues* (Bancel et al. 2017). Then we talk about ‘Fortress Europe’ (Van Houtum and Pijpers 2007) and the ‘European refugee crisis’ and work through the extent of the relevance of this coloniality for understanding these evolutions within the contemporary continent. What about the use of pre-colonial crusade imagery in some current Islamaphobic anti-refugee campaigns, for example? Where would that fit into our ‘postcolonial’ analysis? These kinds of examples force us to acknowledge the longer chronologies of violence and othering in Europe, alongside the specific, located legacies of European colonialism.

When we turn to the United States, we ask why this country has resisted the ‘postcolonial label’, when there is ample evidence of historic and current colonizations (Anderson and Domosh 2002)? So we think about African American history, we take in the ongoing position of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans (Acosta-Belen and Santiago 2006), Mexico and Mexicans (Acuña 1996), including the politics and ethnography of the U.S.-Mexican border (De Leon 2013; Jones 2016), and we seek to understand how indigenous

histories in the United States run in opposition to grand national narratives of the frontier, manifest destiny, progress and U.S. exceptionalism (Gahman 2016; Pulido 2017; Rosenzweig and Thelen 1995). Only then do we confront the significance of the Trump, rather than the Obama, presidency for race and coloniality, when the colonial exploits and fabric of the United States are already laid bare.

The breadth of the curriculum is obviously vast – but the central argument throughout is steady; this is what ‘Western’ coloniality is about, and its legacies are diverse and varied, but they are around us everywhere, and often they are right here ‘in the west’, if we allow ourselves to look, and listen.

Here, it is also impossible to ignore the fact that the module is assessed, and that this is constrained by part of a wider university sector which in the United Kingdom is undergoing neoliberal and increasingly colonial shifts at present. We are required by specific institutional frameworks to provide the equivalent of 4–5,000 words of assessment per student, and to provide each student with a numeric grade. This, in itself, forms a potentially colonial practice – turning students’ varied interpretations and understandings of the range of concepts and ideas we discuss in the module into a grade which ranks their understanding as comparatively better or worse than their peers. More than just being ‘hierarchical’, the underlying coloniality here is in how different knowledges can be judged, by us, more harshly if they do not conform to the academic system which we as the teaching staff are embedded in, but trying to work against. While we try to allow for students to push at some of the disciplinary boundaries of ‘Western’ academic knowledge production, this grading process is also based on our individual understandings of the concepts/ideas/theories of the module as its teachers, and this codifies and limits the opportunities of the students to experiment with these ideas in some ways. However, to push back against this, we allow students relatively free choice in undertaking two different forms of writing. The first of these is a relatively traditional academic essay, where we give students free choice of topic and ask students to explore how postcolonial ideas can help them interpret it. The second is a more distinct piece of writing akin to a review, where we ask students to analyse a cultural artefact – either a museum in Liverpool, a film or a novel. While we provide some structure here, showing films in the class and arranging a field visit to the International Slavery Museum (and more on this to follow), we again allow students free choice to explore issues that they may be more personally interested in.

This process allows us as teachers to provide a degree of support and structure to the students’ learning, while allowing individual students to pursue their own lines of enquiry. This, in practise, is often necessary as the module is the first sustained engagement that students have with post/decolonial ideas during their degree – while individual lectures may have introduced some

postcolonial elements in other modules, it is not until this third-year module that we have the space to cover these ideas in depth. This also means that the content of the module, especially the most radical calls to decolonize our epistemic systems, can be unsettling and challenging for many students. As a result, and depending on individual students' needs, we often find ourselves trying to balance the differing needs of students who are at different stages in their learning – speaking to students who are beginning to question their privilege(s) requires a different attitude and marking scheme to students who have experienced discrimination – but crucially, we believe that decolonial ideas can provide tools for these differing students to help understand and interrogate the world around them. Indeed, while we have noted the fact that occasionally students in anonymous feedback complain about the module being 'white guilt', these responses are outweighed both quantitatively and qualitatively by the responses we have from students who tell us that post- and decolonial ideas have given them a degree of hope for the future. This is especially the case at the current conjuncture of an increased visibility of xenophobic nationalism globally.

On our module then, we strive to shift perspectives, re-centre the world we are drawing so that coloniality is at once made visible and deconstructed. We are keenly aware, though, of the pedagogical and practical and structural limitations we are working within – we cannot claim to be decolonizing our curriculum on the basis of this one module. It is not especially radical to have Sam Selvon on the reading list for a Postcolonial Geographies module – more impact would be made if *The Lonely Londoners* was core reading for the English literature degree. But we do take this work beyond this module – Andy will be running workshops on BAME representation on curricula in our school, for example, and asking staff to reflect on BAME student participation on our programmes. We both approach lectures on other modules through a colonially aware prism – be it on race and gentrification, oriental discourses about Eastern Europe, understanding economic globalization's links to imperialism or exploring 'hidden' colonial histories of cities.

Placing the module: Postcolonial Liverpool

Teaching this module at the University of Liverpool also provides what is seemingly an ideal location to understand the coloniality of the United Kingdom. The city formed a nodal point of the British Empire (Hunt 2014), and the legacies of imperialism are clearly visible throughout much of the cityscape. For instance, many street names are linked to slave traders – most notoriously, Penny Lane, globally famous after an associated song by the Beatles, is potentially named after Captain James Penny (d. 1799) who spoke in favour of slavery to the UK Parliament, but the list of streets named after

the slave trade is huge (there are also, far fewer, streets named after abolitionists such as William Roscoe). Elsewhere, even when not made explicitly visible through overt displays, Liverpool's colonial past is not far from the surface. Our offices in the Department of Geography and Planning overlook Abercrombie Square. Residents of two of the buildings in this Square received substantial compensation payments from the UK Government after the final abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833. Elsewhere in the Square, the School of the Arts currently inhabits the building that operated as the de-facto Confederate Embassy to the United Kingdom during the U.S. Civil War (1861–1865). Liverpool's vested interests in the cotton industry meant that a considerable portion of the city's merchants were pro-Confederacy. The Union also had an embassy in the city, such was Liverpool's importance, although ironically, this was housed on Rodney Street, another street named after an individual who was pro-slavery (in this case, Admiral Sir George Rodney).

Liverpool's connections to empire are not only linked to slavery (Haggerty et al. 2008). The catastrophic economic decline of the city after World War II was a complex process driven by numerous factors, but was certainly influenced by the shifting trading pattern towards Europe and away from imperial trade routes as the British Empire declined – famously, it was claimed, in the post-imperial, pro-European, order of things, Liverpool ended up on the wrong side of the country. This has meant high levels of deprivation across the city, particularly among minority communities. Liverpool is unique among UK cities for the length of historical establishment of some of these communities. For example, the black and Chinese communities are among the longest established in Europe (see Belchem 2014; Brown 2005), but this also means that histories of racial discrimination within the city are deep-rooted, and in some cases are often forgotten. For instance, Andy currently works on a research project about the 1919 Race Riots in the city, but many people who he speaks to in and around the city conflate this project with the 1981 riots (see Frost and Phillips 2011), which have assumed greater prominence in the public memory of the city because of their more recent nature.

The city has officially and unofficially made numerous attempts to challenge and expose this past. The council formally apologized for the city's role in the slave trade in 1999, and since 2007, the International Slavery Museum (ISM) has been open. The ISM is an addition to a range of national-level museums present in the city. Symbolically opened in the year of the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, the ISM is positioned inside the Liverpool Maritime Museum building at the Albert Dock, but is independent of it. The museum is the only museum in the United Kingdom dedicated to the international experience of slavery, and attempts to show the impacts of the Transatlantic Slave trade both historically and in the

present. Alongside these permanent exhibits, various other temporary educational exhibits focused on more recent issues have used the space, including indentured labour struggles in India and Pan-African Revolutionary Art. The ISM is obviously a limited space – attempting to represent and speak for the enslaved in a small, four room, gallery is an impossible task, and the museum is also constrained by the austere funding environment that the public sector in the United Kingdom now faces. It has thus been critiqued on a number of grounds by a variety of academics, from the use of moving images in such spaces (Arnold-de Simine 2012), the ISM's attempts to think about resistance to slavery during the bicentenary (Cubitt 2010), or the museum's positioning in relation to other museum spaces in the city, and indeed the same building (Mah 2014).

As a part of the module we take students to the ISM, which allows them to begin thinking about how colonialism surrounds them in the city they live in, but also how attempts to create decolonized spaces are always fraught and partial endeavours. Our challenge here is to not only allow students to develop lines of critique about what the museum does more or less well but also to make them think about the constraints that the museum (and other similar spaces of memory/reparation/education) are placed within. Students can choose to write about the museum for one of their assignments, but we are more interested in the less formal aspects of learning that the students do here – beginning to think about what is possible in museum spaces, and thinking about the varied roles such spaces now have to perform – as multi-use sites of education, entertainment and consumption. Thinking pragmatically about how, on the one hand, it is amazing that Liverpool has such a radical and progressive museum in the heart of its tourist district, but on the other, the potential is there for the museum to push debates further and to improve in its decolonizing focus, is a key aspect of the module, and a learning outcome that students could then apply to other spaces and places.

The imperial nature of Liverpool therefore means that, in theory, our module is seemingly perfectly placed to use the city around us to think about some of the issues we raised above. While this is undoubtedly the case, it is sometimes a struggle to encourage students to question and unpick some of these historical legacies. On other modules, we have had feedback from students which criticizes us for ‘focussing on the past’ too much, and pushing students to think about the importance of legacy, memory and coloniality in a space where many of them have not seen or experienced some of the negative consequences of colonialism at first hand, remains an ongoing challenge. However, we are also incredibly lucky to be able to teach this module in a city like Liverpool, where the links to colonialism, if you scratch the surface, are quite literally on our doorstep. Indeed, while writing this chapter, the university has become a major UK news story as a result of a campaign by

students to alter the name of some of its accommodation buildings – Roscoe and Gladstone Halls – in order to recognize William Gladstone's links to the slave trade (see Mapako 2017).

Conclusion

Our teaching of the Postcolonial Geographies module raises important pedagogical and practical issues surrounding this mounting impetus to take the need to decolonize in the university seriously. We hope we have shown here how it is possible to be ambitious with the content of the curriculum – that the breadth and diversity of colonial legacies is not something we should shy away from, but deserves to be incorporated into new decolonizing narratives where possible. We can counterbalance such wide framing with detailed readings of key theorists and cultural texts and spaces, and find a balance between challenging established understandings of the 'bigger picture' and nurturing an appreciation for the situated, positioned, nature of knowledge and experience. We have also underlined the importance of our own positionalities as lecturers – that we cannot teach a module like this without being prepared to acknowledge where we ourselves sit in these wider framings, and what our own experiences have done to shape the way we teach. Like all teaching, some things work better than others, some things might work one year but not the next, and some students will be inspired, while others finish the module still not entirely convinced by the decolonial premise. But each year we always find that the engaged students are in the majority, and that for many the module helps to prompt a fundamental shift in how they see the world, and how they understand their place in it. For some of our BAME students, this experience is particularly significant – it is often the first time the perspective has shifted, during their entire degree, to centre experiences and legacies that may be especially meaningful for them. And this for us is key to the work Geography needs to do to embrace these decolonizing calls.

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Chapter 10

Race, Class and Gender at German Universities: A Round-Table Discussion

Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Kien Nghi Ha,
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While there have been ongoing discussions on gender in German tertiary institutions (though largely restricted to issues of gender mainstreaming), the engagement with racist structures in study programs, teaching and recruitment practices is still absent.¹ Likewise, class relations, which tend to not be subsumed under labels such as ‘equity’ or ‘diversity’, have continued to characterize the German tertiary education sector, despite the reforms in the 1970s. What are the relations among the (lacking) engagement with racism and debates on gender and class? What are the effects of the increasingly competitive regulation of universities regarding specific power formations and democratic processes? And which practical coping strategies and forms of political intervention can be developed from different positions of marginalization?

These and other questions were put to a round table of five scholars by Jan Hutta, a member of the editorial team of *sub\urban*, a German journal for critical urban studies. All participants have conducted research on the various facets of racism as well as class and gender relations in tertiary institutions in Germany (and beyond). Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Kien Nghi Ha, Emily Ngubia Kessé, Mike Laufenberg and Lars Schmitt have all experienced these power relations in their respective biographical and work-related contexts and have issued several publications on these aspects, serving as a point of departure for this exchange.² The conversation took place on an online pad over the period of one month after a specific opening question was

1 The following conversation has been slightly abridged. The original German version appeared in *sub\urban – zeitschrift für kritische stadtforschung*, volume 4, 2016, (issue 2/3, pp. 161–190). For the translation, we thank Eric Otieno Sumba. Furthermore, we thank Jan Hutta and Mike Laufenberg for additional editorial remarks.

2 See Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2016), Kuria [Kessé] (2015), Laufenberg (2016) and Schmitt (2010).

posed to each participant. At several stages during the conversation, different conversation strands emerged, and the conversation soon took on a complex non-linear course that has been edited for structure and coherence. During this process, it became clear that the conversations that began at this round table needed to be continued.

Jan Hutta (JH): Nghi, you have criticized the fact that discrimination and exclusion of people of colour at German universities are not being removed, but are rather obscured by the selective visualization of cultural diversity in processes of internationalization. What is going wrong?

Kien Nghi Ha (KNH): To answer this question satisfactorily, it is necessary to historically explicate the sociopolitical context. When we talk about racism as a structural problem in German universities, one notices that this topic was not even being discussed until very recently. Before, the academic engagement with racism was basically restricted to a politics of externalization, which at best recognized racist structures in society, but was blind when it came to its own privileges, resources and working contexts. In the 1960s, classism and sexism were increasingly discussed and criticized as being fundamental to Western university systems. In the course of these cultural and political changes, society became more accommodative of policy reform in higher education. It emerged that after a prolonged and ongoing struggle, the gender perspective was both politically and institutionally palatable, and was able to change institutional structures and their rules of engagement. Although affirmative action policies have a clear emancipatory potential with regard to being a corrective for historical inequality and exclusion of women in academia, there is little reason to idealize its pitfalls and exceptions. Colonial, racist and class-based issues have been ignored from the very beginning in the bourgeoisie-dominated debate on the university as a site of characteristically male knowledge production. Gender affirmative action, in its current form, has largely advanced the careers of *white* middle-class women in academia. This does not mean that this development should be dismissed, in view of the aim of representing societal normality: as limited as this diversification is, broader presence of *white* women in higher echelons of the university seems justifiable when compared to the even more miserable previous status quo.

On the other hand, it is also necessary to take the negative sides of these developments seriously, and not to discredit the discussion about them as one based on jealousy. It would be important to focus all analytical and political efforts on structures and power relations in their various dimensions because it is not by accident that this debate is often occupied by *white* subjects, and that the university is apparently considered a *white* space. When one looks at the political culture in society and at university, the limits of perception, empathy and recognition become clear. The questions and problems of *white*

subject formation and its attendant identity politics and hegemonic representations have not at all become obsolete on the dominant side.

The university as a social, political and cultural arena is embedded intersectionally, its formation rests upon several axes of power that are each hegemonic in different ways and that can even contradict each other. Relevant, problematic or progressive constructions are seen through a gaze of *white* subjectivity, which in turn is (in)formed by power structures of coloniality. It is no wonder therefore that the interests and the societal needs of communities of colour are not centred, or seen as relevant and requiring visibility. Consequently, I think that in the discussion today one must not forget the structure and historical emergence of German politics of higher education. It is not only a question of neoliberal economization pressures and a racist mainstream: The *white* academic left, just like white feminist movements, also played a role in the whitewashing of the university. Just like the effects of the 1968 protests and the coloniality of modernity, these issues cannot be conceptualized on a national level without being contextualized internationally.

That said, my argument is that the strategic placement of cultural internationalization in German universities follows a historical ignorance of racism as an inherent component of Western knowledge production within colonial modernity. Instead of engaging with the various connections between racism as a social relation and the university as a social site of learning and working, polished image politics were invoked in the self-serving hope that the German university would secure a favourable spot in the race for scientific ‘excellence’. By so doing, racist relations in the academic hierarchy are simply glossed over by colourful PR. The original motivation behind internationalization was an efficient and selective appraisal of cultural diversity in the neoliberal university, without prioritizing equality within the post-migrant German society in the long run. If these tendencies continue, unintended effects cannot be prevented: many international students and researchers are likely to act wilfully as first-generation migrants and to a certain extent inadvertently create access and disrupt structures. This, however, would be a best-case scenario and would take decades.

Based on these tendencies, it would be negligent to confuse the internationalization of the university with the problem of equity and societal representation of minorities and racialized communities within Germany. These people have often grown up here and are not necessarily migrants themselves. In the face of real exclusion based on racialized border-drawing and societal power relations in the academic space, a discussion on equity and anti-discrimination is necessary to achieve results in the long run. Naturally, this debate will not be easy, it will trigger defence mechanisms as is always the case whenever distributional aspects of social justice are up for renegotiation,

and marginalized groups demand their institutional rights to decide and participate. One can only imagine the self-consciousness of a hegemonic and oh-so-liberal and progressive university. Even after the PISA shock of 2000, the ensuing debate on the lack of equal opportunities in the German education system somehow missed out on the issues of social inequality and discrimination within German universities. The implicit message was that a debate on the elimination of hurdles and a process institutional opening was superfluous. This reaction, at best, points to common ignorance and lack of responsibility. However, it is clear that a continued silencing of this problem is no longer possible because resistance is mounting. Anyone who pays even minimum attention knows that migrants and people of colour are as marginalized within the university as they are outside of it, which is not sustainable.

Emily Ngubia Kessé (ENK): Indeed, racism has for centuries been ignored by academic discourse, especially in Germany and at German-speaking universities. Still, racism has never been absent. Especially at university racism was justified and transformed into a scientifically proven, biological ‘thing’. You also cited feminist science as a place, where *white* identity was negotiated in connection with gender and subject status and settled within a rhetoric of equality. The university has historically been the space where societies have ‘employed’ others to describe the world we live in. That is to say that academics play an important role in providing society with a handle on how to articulate or think about their realities (think about how Hegelian and Kantian ideas have become everyday knowledge). Racism was of course not created at the university; it has always been a part of Western societies where privilege and capitalist control over resources has depended on the enslavement and colonialization of others. The university, however, has played a significant role in justifying racism, and intellectualizing power imbalances. Race or biologized human difference was one such instrument employed to justify the subjugation of non-*white* others and the consumption of their labour and resources. The university is thereby the location where *white* identity has continually redefined, transformed and rearticulated itself. (By this, I mean that it’s a place of formalization, standardization and academization of *white* norms.) It is also the locus that has played a critical role in keeping a *white* worldview at the centre stage of lived realities and ‘discoveries’. The university feeds cultural ideas and symbols and aids the society to set up and stabilize exclusionary prejudices, norms and stereotypes. This readiness to think about the reformation of the university in relation to gender and class was only possible after it became clear that some *white others* were unjustifiably being kept out of this public (here public often meant *white*) resource. These debates have happened behind the rhetoric of equality and sameness where a ‘right’ to a share of the privileges and resources is not, so to speak, fundamentally questioned. In the case of racially fuelled exclusions, same

worth is fundamentally questioned and rejected, and thus a ‘right’ to available resources denied and even not negotiated. ‘Rightful ownership’ is constructed by colonial hierarchies that allocate property to whiteness, as the ‘rightful owner of the land’ (here, I think of Cheryl Harris’ work issued in 1993). University reforms thus become ‘negotiable’ when this ownership clause is secured by membership to the system of *white* dominance, where whiteness is the unnamed standard and norm. For me, it is clear that it is often only in these contexts (where *white* others are excluded) that class and gender have more broadly been theorized and articulated.

JH: Ngubia, this brings me to your book ‘*Registered – Taking a Stance against Racism in German Tertiary Institutions*’ (Kuria 2015), where you draw a multifaceted picture of the marginalization and discrimination that confront black students and students of colour in German universities – that is, if they get admitted in the first place. Black People and/or People of Color (BPOC) are implicitly or explicitly told that they do not belong in a *white* institution. Which mechanisms are most efficacious in this regard?

ENK: I think that one of the most powerful mechanisms that foster continued racialization at the university is their blatant denial. Neoliberal *white* Western German universities sell the myth that they are ‘open’ and actively working towards inclusiveness and even project a feigned excitement in ‘including’ students with an international background (of course, the very idea that there is one who can include – and decide upon the criteria of inclusion in the first place – points squarely to unspoken power dynamics that shape this politically contested space). In a sense, under the rhetoric of diversity and internationalization, it becomes difficult (for the university administration) to accept or imagine that a ‘liberal’ and ‘civilized’ institution containing the highest calibre of educated citizens could even have the capacity to racialize – often interpreted as exclusion (as if education is supposed to exorcise racism). Such an attitude rests on the misinformation or, rather, miseducation that defines or imagines racism to be ‘a set of unfounded ill-informed negative attitudes’ belonging to the ‘less educated’ masses. Here, class of course is operationalized to distance the elitist bourgeoisie from racism. Detaching racism from the *white* hegemonic power structures that systematically place whiteness on a pedestal and assign it with unmerited privileges is the unnamed culprit: *white* attitudes of superiority are translated into daily living through thoughts/thinking, actions, behaviours, structures of in/exclusion, cultural values, to name but a few. I guess that the point that I want to make here is the fact that the non-perception and de-naming or masquerading of racism (defining it, for instance, as a result of individual feelings), and also detaching it from the *white* privilege – all this taken together is the most powerful mechanism for sustaining racism in German universities. This, for example, makes it impossible for universities to acknowledge

when a racist situation occurs. It even makes it difficult for a university based on imperialist colonial values to recognize that its very values feed on this idea of *white* supremacy, including of course the epistemologies it creates. Because you cannot fight what you deny or refuse to acknowledge, this luxurious ignorance sets the stage for fostering and sustaining systematic racism in the university. Responsibility only comes when ownership is claimed, and Germany is currently in a continual denial and is unable to admit its centuries of colonial atrocities.

Lars Schmitt (LS): Ngubia, you do not only debunk ‘openness’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘diversity’ as ‘sales myths’ but you also address the question of power, that is, who is actually allowed to include and how, and who has to participate. Just as interesting is how you describe how racism becomes rephrased as exclusion. The word exclusion victimizes, and diverts attention from the structural aspects, representations, actions and their normalization, as well as the connections to the (educated) middle class. Here, there are parallels to the obfuscation that I see in the academic field. I would add inclusion and diversity to my list of ‘dethematization instruments of inequality’, as I have tried to elaborate elsewhere (Eickhoff and Schmitt 2016). Talking about diversity and inclusion can serve as a terribly effective strategy of obscuring *white*, male and middle-class privilege. Drawing on the descriptions of some of my students in my seminars, it became clear that racialization was only visible to those who face it. Which is why it is very important to reveal these mechanisms in the narratives of people with a dominant habitus (*white*, male, . . .) collectively in semi-safe spaces. This process will probably never be completely free of shame and embarrassment.

Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez (EGR): In European academia, racism still remains a ‘particular’ object of study. Its constitutive character for the configuration of society is largely, as you say, denied. Ngubia, you point out how the European history of colonialism and enslavement is denied permanently, although this very history has nourished academic traditions in the Western hemisphere. These traditions remain unbroken in the neoliberal university. The neoliberal university can appear to include black and other people of colour in order to reaffirm and expand their canon without disrupting the establishment. The inclusion of postcolonial studies, decolonial perspectives or soon maybe even ‘institutional racism’ in the curricula can take place by simply integrating them as new objects of research and study without fundamentally disrupting the establishment’s mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Anti-racist, decolonial, feminist-queer debates deriving from social struggles can be co-opted and streamlined in the neoliberal university. The outcome then is diversity, gender equity and equal opportunities. The neoliberal university is multicultural, gender-sensitive and family-friendly – and if convenient postcolonial, decolonial and even feminist. These

incorporations are done by the actors now having the professorships. We are implicated in this process and need to raise questions regarding the reproduction of mechanisms of exclusion. The question is thus: If everything is being included, what then is the problem with the neoliberal university?

I was in South Africa this summer and got to know the programmes for transformation of higher education established in the past two decades. It was impressive to see how former *white* campuses of elite universities have been transformed into campuses where admission of black students is constantly increasing and has reached over 50 per cent in campuses such as the University of the Free State. It is this generation of students that is claiming the university as their space and not only asking for access to the university for all ('fees must fall') but also raising questions with regard to curricula that underestimate racism and don't talk about European colonialism, Maafa and settler colonialism. And finally this generation also poses the question: 'Why is my professor not Black?' These are relevant questions that cannot be neglected and are not addressed by just increasing the percentage of BPoC scholars at the neoliberal university from 2 to 15 per cent. The neoliberal university can increase its attractiveness for their potential clients (students) by ticking the boxes of inclusion. Yet, the increase in fees, the commodification of education and the conversion of academics into 'brokers' go against the grain of higher education as a site of learning, reflection, analysis, critique and exploration for everyone.

ENK: Yes, Encarnación, that is why decolonizing the university has to be the agenda of anti-racist activism in the universities, that is, reflecting on the canon, reflecting on the traditional character of whiteness in the university, and on its ableist, *white*, gendered premises and so on. . . . Like you rightly say (see below), 'racism at the university cannot be eradicated by employing more BPoC, even though this in itself would be a huge success'.

OBFUSCATION AND NON-PERCEPTION OF RACE AND CLASS RELATIONS

JH: The question of opportunities to talk about and deconstruct processes of racialization and other forms of power is very important, and we will come back to that. Mike, do you want to comment on the misperception that Ngubia talked about?

Mike Laufenberg (ML): So far, everything that has been discussed presents a coherent picture: you do not focus so much on passiveness or silence in the face of racism; instead you focus on speaking, to be precise, on particular ways of speaking as the actual problem. When it comes to racism, the colonial history of the university and its function as a space where social

inequality is reproduced and where these issues are silenced or made impossible to address is only part of the problem. The other part of the problem (and this presents us with even greater challenges if we are to critically intervene) is that the neoliberal university has found ways to talk about racism without talking about racism. This is really insidious because it then becomes easier to delegitimize or to completely neutralize critique of racism and the coloniality of the university.

When racism is actually being discussed, as Ngubia has so pointedly described, it is discussed as a personal fallacy, an individual exception. As all of you have shown clearly, whoever dares to accuse the university as an institution of racism is pelted with shiny brochures on internationality, diversity management and the syllabi of centres for migration and gender studies that are supposedly inherently critical of racism. Encarnación, however, reveals the contradiction by emphasizing how the neoliberal university absorbs critical research and teaching, instrumentalizes it as a progressive figurehead and exploits it as a tool for securing a competitive edge. We will return to this contradiction, because it demonstrates that the neoliberal university is not a monolith but a space where social struggles take place. Self-criticism granted, these are struggles that we are involved in, and that we want to be involved in because we recognize the university as a pre-eminent site for the reproduction of power relations, racism and classism, and therefore also for their critique.

But I would also like to discuss another relation of power that in my view belongs to the category of the masking techniques that obfuscate racism and classism: meritocracy. The meritocratic myth obscures the contradiction between bourgeois institutions like the university which on the one hand proclaim an abstract sense of equality, but on the other are still based on social stratification, racism and patriarchy. This also occurs through a discursive and political shift from the norm of equality to the value of equity. Accordingly, whoever does not succeed despite having the same chances in the education system, whoever loses the race for the best careers: in short, whoever does not succeed at moving from an underprivileged to a privileged position is either not talented enough or lacks ambition and diligence. Inequality thus appears to be self-inflicted and therefore justified. A key factor obscuring the power relations of meritocracy is the assertion that there are objective and neutral criteria for measuring merit, such as grades or citation indices. However, what is perceived as good rewardable merit is already filtered by power and relations of domination and closely aligned to the habitus of those for whom the university was originally made: those who can feel at home at the university. Meritocracy works to the advantage of those who fulfil or can perform within the regulative ideal of an educated, middle-class *white* masculine realm.

KNH: Ngubia and Lars have deconstructed the university as a site of societal progress, open discourse and cosmopolitan open-mindedness. I would

add that these discourses point to the Janus-faced character of this academic self-presentation: indeed these discourses have a dark side that goes unacknowledged. For me, it is important that the local and the everyday are connected to global structures and historical dimensions so that we do not only reveal episodes but rather a comprehensive picture.

Historically, it becomes clearer when we embed the self-image of the university in a larger and more comprehensive history of Western discourses of superiority and hegemonic claims. This history has to be thought together with a global civilizing mission to ‘save’ and ‘uplift’ the non-European. In this context, such self-attributions were used to legitimize the enslavement and colonization of others. The history of science and the university in the West is a history that is strongly connected to constructions of race and colonial practise, so much that it seems indeed appropriate to speak of a scientific coloniality. If the signs are not misleading, this history is still ongoing and creating new contemporary forms.

Today we see that the Western construction of itself as a liberal, tolerant and democratic (with the university at its apex) entity is influencing current political developments. This construction implicitly suggests that non-Western others are backward, a discourse that risks falling back on colonial tropes and hierarchies, thereby reproducing them. Anti-Muslim discourses especially are taking place along binary world views and are finding a wide basis for consensus: a binarity is created between a progressive and civilized West that operates strictly on rational scientific principles, and Islam which supposedly embodies the opposite.

If we follow this trace, we find the phenomena of neo-imperial wars in the Middle East and the dynamics that uphold, flexibilize and modernize the current neoliberal world order. In all of these contexts, it would be interesting to analyse the role of academic knowledge production and the Western-centric and hierarchical structure of the global university system. Unfortunately, we only find decolonial critiques of science at the margins of the Western academic system, whereas the social science and cultural studies mainstream continues to maintain a Eurocentric orientation.

The relationship between science and coloniality constitutes an important basis for the Western dominance of modernity. This makes it even more absurd as well as programmatic that minimal research has covered this topic. I wish that self-reflection on the embeddedness of academic institutions and scientific praxis into colonial power relations was more prominently discussed in research and teaching, but this can only be achieved by appropriately incentivizing research activities in this area.

LS: Here we see again a phenomenon that Encarnación and Mike have discussed above – how critical theory is systematically co-opted in various ways. This is not just the case in sociology of ‘development’ alone; there

are also examples from peace and conflict studies. In sociology of ‘intervention’, for example, habitual sensibility on the side of intervening actors and organizations is increasingly being claimed. This was the case in the military deployment in Afghanistan, even though the term ‘intervention’ is euphemistic as it suggests that an external party who previously had nothing to do with the conflict is intervening.

JH: In geography we are especially confronted with the embeddedness of academic practice, for instance, in the still very development-oriented research activity with regard to African, Asian or Latin American contexts. A few years back, while we were preparing a class, I almost fell off my chair when I read Jürgen Bähr’s piece on ‘race’ in his standard work on population geography (published in 2010). Problematized solely by a single footnote, Bähr attempts to illustrate the distribution of different races in the world by referring to several racial groups and their autochthonous geographical locations. Furthermore, the ‘excursion’ as a geographical format, used regularly in teaching, of course also has colonial roots that are rarely reflected upon – notwithstanding, such trips can also be used to contribute to an engagement with questions of positionality and coloniality, or with theories of global power relations, dependency theory or decolonial epistemology. There have been interesting approaches in this regard in the past few years, even though – as Nghi mentioned – they are still at the margins. I also wanted to return to instruments of dethematization, as Lars has called them. Lars, in your work you mention the ‘hidden mechanisms of power’ in a Bourdieuan sense with which students from ‘non-academic milieus’ have to grapple with at German universities. You describe the fear and insecurity that emerge from experiences of not fitting in. What do such experiences tell us about the university system in general?

LS: These experiences, in my view, show that the university system (still, or more than ever) is based on the mechanisms, or maybe even the principles of ‘conservation through change’ and ‘obfuscation through transparency’. I mean that, ironically, the Bologna Process and some economization aspects of the university were meant to address inequality in terms of distributional justice and equal opportunity. That way, it was easier to conserve power relations while maintaining the state of affairs at the level of symbolic representation. The same applies to transparency and political participation. On various levels university staff are required to be transparent and open towards political participation. When the ones leading the discourse are able to present their perspective on transparency as the universal meaning of transparency, then not only does nothing change but also relations of dominance are more effectively obscured through the affirmation that clarity and the opportunity for participation were communicated in advance (‘I already sent it via the email list for comments’ would be one example).

This applies regardless of the majority-minority ratio. Approximately 70 per cent of students at Düsseldorf University of Applied Sciences do not come from an academic background, a very high rate even for a university of applied sciences. Even so, many patterns here favour an academic habitus, or the performance thereof: for example, the expectation that self-regulated learning is a given among all students even though it has been shown that many of the so-called ‘academic pioneers’ have difficulties with this form of learning. This is because many of the strategies that they previously learnt and successfully employed were for the short term. The same applies to the need for recognition and self-doubt as well.

EGR: I would like to take up the point about the incompatibility regarding non-academic milieus, sexism and racism. The discussion on institutional racism is also always a discussion about daily experiences of discrimination. It is not always about explicit exclusion. As the research on institutional discrimination in schools has shown, there are always direct and indirect practices of exclusion. Indirect discrimination manifests itself in daily interactions in which some people become projection surfaces, objects of the gossip factory and of practises of exclusion and neglect. These practices contribute to the overlooking of the people that are made to be projection surfaces for these subtle attacks and who are thereby also discredited. On the other hand, the people who orchestrate these subtle attacks constitute their sense of belonging to a clique in a process of ‘white bonding’ or ‘hegemonic bonding’. These everyday and sublime practises immobilize people and make them sick; some even leave the university because they cannot handle it and do not see any career perspectives. Students may drop out or develop a consciousness that frames the university as its own world, and not as a place where they can explore themselves or as a potential workplace. For PhD candidates and postdocs, these dynamics are aggravated by the lack of institutional support.

Racism at the university cannot simply be eradicated by employing more BPoC, even though this in itself would be a huge success. This is because, apart from the structural discrimination of BPoC, we also have to think about the emotional landscapes that make certain spaces unliveable. When I talk about institutional racism, I am also referring to the subtle mechanisms that degrade and question certain people’s right to existence. In this context, we are talking about people who are considered ‘space invaders’ (Puwar 2004) by members of the majority within the university as an institution. The convergence of class, nationality, race, religion, sexuality and ability play a decisive role.

I remember a situation at the university of Hamburg when, during a recruitment commission session, a professorial member of the commission exclaimed, ‘We aren’t going to be sharing a table with the service staff, are

we?" Although the comment was not directed at me, it was immediately clear for me that the question as to who gets a seat at the table is of great importance for people who demarcate their private space based on social distinction, and who are used to being served by other people. When the daughter of the cleaning lady, or the person one would employ as a gardener, or as a cook or nanny suddenly has the same position as oneself, it may be celebrated, as long as it remains the exception. When it becomes the rule, it can be considered a threat, as it is seen to destabilize the social hierarchy.

Casual racism that organizes the order between societally superior and inferior positions occurs in everyday encounters, addressing and interactions. In this context, imagination, presuppositions and emotions are the basis for action. Racism works by designating an outside as the norm. The generally applicable basics of interaction are suddenly abandoned, the exception to the rule is established. For instance, when a person is interrupted in daily interactions between colleagues, not invited to certain meetings or overlooked during project presentations. Aside from the daily ego-profiling ambitions that are required and performed over and over within academic sociality, dynamics of institutional racism are let to pass without comment or discussion where they would otherwise be considered unfair or unethical among colleagues.

ENK: Encarnación, this is a beautiful and complex analytical piece, describing the ordinariness of racism and exclusion. The ordinariness of racism makes it difficult to 'put your finger on it' making it almost impossible to address – a frustrating experience. From this subject position, I have observed the eloquent silences surrounding it, especially from *white* colleagues. The palpable blatancy and eloquent subtlety accompanying these performances construct the 'other' as pathological, seeing what 'does not exist' or cannot be seen – basically as schizophrenic. This might sound controversial, but I am beginning to realize that such racializations (racisms) cannot be squarely addressed with *white* colleagues by branding their actions as racist (even while we all know what lies beyond the tip of the iceberg). Here, I have been contemplating on developing new tools that directly pin and flashlight such racist indiscretions, all the while leaving them unbranded as racist. Thanks a lot for articulating these aspects so eloquently.

INTERNATIONALIZATION AND ECONOMIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY

JH: This discussion of the often subtle ways in which power is exercised shows how hard it is to address racism based only on quotas and diversity discourses. Before we deepen the question of political strategy, could we, as Nghi mentioned earlier, embed this in the societal and university context, as well as discuss the intersectional entanglements? Encarnación, you have

studied the correlations between forms of racist exclusion, migration control and the (neo)liberalization of the university. How would you contextualize the developments in the past few years?

EGR: Internationalization efforts at the university must be discussed in connection to the economization of the university. Universities in the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries as well as in Latin American countries such as Brazil, Mexico, Columbia, Chile and Ecuador are orienting themselves towards a global higher education market. Currently, this process is also visible in Germany. International students are a source of income, especially for universities in the United States and in the United Kingdom.

Migration researchers have been pointing towards the effects of this development, which is most clearly visible in the rising mobility and migration patterns of international students. Migration policies in the United States and the United Kingdom are acting in a very restrictive way to regulate this field. Accordingly, the university is not free from the logic of exclusion inherent in these regulatory processes. When migration policies enter the gates of the neoliberal university, the national, racializing matrix that is fundamental for the nation state and its governing logics becomes revealed. Even as migration policies do not directly engage in a racialized discourse, the immanent technology for the production of an ‘other’ possesses a racializing power which manifests itself in the creation of concrete racialized subjects.

International students and scientists as well as non-academic personnel are confronted with visa requirements and other modalities of migration control. The degree and intensity vary depending on national, regional, religious and economic background. The legal status of migrants is decisive for the opportunities or hurdles that confront individuals or groups marked as migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. Undocumented migrants, refugees without a residence permit and people who have applied for asylum have no access to higher education. Even if they fulfil the official requirements for the acceptance into the university, their legal status condemns them to a status of social stagnation, and prevents them from participating in employment or higher education.

In the case of international students and researchers, we have a group of migrants who are in a position to secure temporary residence permits in Europe based on their financial resources or professional competence. However, depending on their national origin, they are not safe from the discrimination by means of anti-migration rhetoric and migration control policies. The degree to which international researchers and international students are subjected to controls varies depending on the different bilateral and transnational agreements between their host country and their countries of origin. For example, students from the United States, Canada or Japan do not need a visa to travel to Germany.

Simultaneously, students from Eastern Europe, most countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia have to apply for a visa, and have to overcome a number of restrictions on arrival and during registration for their respective programmes (Amjahid 2011). The degree of control and the restrictive dimensions again may vary depending on national economic and political interests. In their study on racial discrimination of international students in the United States, Jenny Lee and Charles Rice (2007) find that students from the Middle East, Africa, East and South Asia as well as Latin America face a form of racial discrimination that Lee (2007) has described as neo-racism. In this context, Lee differentiates between direct forms of racial discrimination, such as legal hurdles and the restriction of personal freedoms, and indirect discrimination through unequal treatment.

In the European context, migration surveillance and control technologies at the university are mediated not only by political regulations, directives and measures but also by casual everyday racism and stereotypes. Institutional racism is thus experienced at both of these levels. Based on the distinction between ‘citizen’ and ‘migrant’, migration policies produce different legal categories of access to civil rights. Issues of settlement, political participation, freedom of movement, access to the job market, to education, to health insurance and to social safety nets are regulated on this basis.

JH: Mike, the economization of education that Encarnación has mentioned connects to your work on capitalist class relations at the university, which is yet another facet of intersectional power relations. You have argued that the discrimination of people from the working and poverty classes has increased due to the economization of universities, especially after the master’s degree level. Which dynamics are recognizable in this context?

ML: First and foremost, it is important to emphasize that the economization of the university is not a new phenomenon. Already in the 1960s and the 1970s, the state initiated a strategic expansion of universities. It was during this process that the university was subsumed into the capitalistic processes of reproduction. The expansion of universities was part of the large-scale reconfiguration processes, which in the aftermath of the 1966/67 recession aimed at reinventing the capitalist model of accumulation as a form of mass production and mass consumption.

The hitherto model, a feudal and secluded university, that focused on the education of the bourgeoisie seemed increasingly anachronistic, as it was not able to meet the growing demand for a technically and scientifically qualified labour force on the private and public job market. This, for the first time, led to an opening of the German university to sections of the working classes. Beginning in the 1980s, working class students experienced new opportunity structures that enabled them to pursue a scientific career and to be appointed to professorships.

Current research, however, shows that this development is receding since the turn of the century; we are experiencing a renewed process of social closure.

The current trend towards social exclusivity at the university is not entirely accidental. Rather, it is a key characteristic of the neoliberal university. Since the 1990s new institutional mechanisms of reproducing social inequality were implemented systematically, with the introduction of the dual bachelor-master system and the creation of the junior professorship vividly demonstrating these changes.

The transition from bachelor to master creates a renewed selection mechanism that did not exist in the previous system, and that demonstrably puts students from non-academic family backgrounds at a significant disadvantage. Out of financial or habitual reasons this group of students decides less frequently than students from an academic background to pursue a master's degree. With regard to junior professorship positions, there is also proof that out of all professorial status groups, this group exhibits the highest degree of social closure. Since junior professorships are required to be filled soon after the acquisition of a PhD, criteria beyond the PhD grade such as the duration of the applicants' studies and PhD as well as the applicants' age are considered. This puts applicants from a middle-class background at an advantage, since based on their cultural capital they have a head-start on average and can reach their academic goals and ascend to high-status positions faster than their counterparts from working and poverty-class households.

The social exclusivity of the neoliberal university correlates with current strategies of an economically efficient university administration. Both new developments – the introduction of a bachelor-master system and junior professorships – were meant to reduce the cost of production and reproduction of labour as well as their value: On the one hand through the faster achievement of employability, and on the other hand through reduction of costs by creating new employee categories that are cheaper in comparison with full professorships. Through these changes, the neoliberal university was able to reconcile two functions of reproduction that have increasingly been in conflict with each other since the social opening of the German university in the 1970s: On the one hand, the university is supposed to impart specific skills and competences to the potential labour force that are at par with current means and ways of production and capitalist accumulation. On the other hand, the university system was to secure the reproduction of privilege and the dominance of the ruling classes. The 'mass university', as the post-reform university was frequently referred to in a derogatory way, appeared to threaten the latter function.

It brought a sense of fear to the middle classes who were afraid that their own cultural capital was going to be devalued by the mass production of

academic degrees. In the 1970s and 1980s conservative forces of the academic elite were already calling for a stronger regulation of access to the university and a differentiation of the university into elite and less reputable fields as well as a shortening of the duration of study. Beginning in the 1990s, these reforms were gradually implemented. With the systematic reproduction of devalued degrees, the normalization of precarious working conditions, and the continued segregation of professorial status groups in elite and less reputable categories, the neoliberal university managed to fulfil the required quota of academically qualified labour, yet without interrupting the reproduction of elite class relations, which had once been the goal of the socio-liberal project of reforming the university.

LS: To that I just wanted to add the obvious fact that behind these distributions are actual experiences that can be observed every day at the university: Masters students or sometimes even PhD candidates come to the realization that the university is not made for them. For some this is a bitter realization, for others it does not come as a surprise, but rather as a normalization.

ENK: When we talk about people from the working classes, we somehow speak about *white* people as if this was synonymous. I find that extremely interesting for our discussion because it conflates humanness with whiteness and links it to this Marxist struggle. I think this opens up some other layers of examination, including for example how different academic qualifications and requirements were put into place to deny entrance specifically to students of colour who have been evidently absent from the university, and whose struggles have remained un-named in most of the respective research. Interesting for me is how such mechanisms specifically function to uphold the *white* able-bodied male heteronormative norm. Lars, your additional point is splendid. I really like how you bring the subject back to the individual, here again introducing what I can also interpret as habitus – how it is enacted, that is, how it is operationalized through actions, words and interactions to keep ‘unwanted others’ at bay.

INTERSECTIONAL IMPACTS OF DISCRIMINATION

ML: Lars and Ngubia, I agree with you on both the importance of the level of subjective experience and on Ngubia’s interjection that there is a danger if we imagine the working class implicitly as *white*. I would like to respond to both points by referring to my personal experience: Last year I co-organized a two-part empowerment workshop with Myriam Raboldt and Tanja Abou at the University of Technology of Berlin for students and faculty from working/poverty class backgrounds (Tanja Abou conceptualized and led the workshop). We talked about many things: about our biographical paths, our

experiences of class shaming, the devaluation of our origins and the context-specific experiences that necessitate a different learning and working environment. We also discussed manifestations of sheer discrimination. What became clear during the workshop is the conflation of class-specific discrimination and race. Almost half of the participating students and faculty were of colour. Although everyone in the room had experienced difficult and hurtful situations, their experiences showed how the most explicit forms of direct and open discrimination were those in which race and class intersected and reinforced each other. They experienced situations of racism at the university simultaneously as situations where their working class background was stigmatized and devalued. The racialization in such cases worked as a class-specific marker, as an explicit naming, devaluation and exposure of their class habitus.

KNH: I have no intention of diverting the discussion; I would only like to expand it intersectionally. Interestingly, not only liberal and Marxist approaches have blind spots, since they disregard questions of race and gender in the university context. Thus, early feminist movements fought for access to universities for white educated middle-class women, ignoring the women in the proletariat who in turn organized themselves.

Black feminists and women of colour in the U.S. context began already in the 1970s to draw attention to their exclusion within the (white) feminist women's movement that was mainly bourgeois. The same applied to anti-racist movements within PoC communities that were also a bourgeois male affair. Among PoCs and black communities, access to the university is also mediated by their class background, which explains why working-class students and teachers of colour still are a minority at the university.

Various aspects of identity politics that are based on structural exclusion in society and in social movements are plagued by the problem that each group that fights for an adequate representation and participation does so only for its own members. The struggles for access, resources and positions of power within the university are no exemption in the sense that they are part and parcel of bigger social movements. It remains to be seen how a fair and appropriate representation of different social groups at university and in society may look like. No common conceptualization exists in this regard. What is more, due to the scarce resources available for distribution, it becomes a zero-sum game: gains made by one group are perceived as a loss for another group. All of this has not changed fundamentally to this day. As long as access to the university and even more so to professorships remains dependent on class, these debates will always be carried out by those who are already in influential positions within the university.

JH: Returning to what you mentioned earlier, Lars, to the level of daily experience: Where would you see the challenges of an intersectional perspective in terms of self-reflection and political intervention?

LS: Considering different dimensions of inequality, it is interesting that especially amongst students in social sciences and faculties that consider themselves politically left, there is this understanding that one has to be political, have a political stance and/or articulate oneself in politically correct language. This understanding does not come naturally for first-generation academics. Here, well-meaning emancipatory concerns hide a praxis of exclusion or classism (the term is, however, misleading, because in this context it is about diverse social origins or habitus, and less about different classes per se). This is not an accusation; it is rather a call to look at one's own privileges and positionality. It is easier of course to see dimensions of disadvantage that affect us directly. Not questioning one's own privilege and complicity in structures of dominance is also part of the university system.

At my university, we are currently trying to dismantle this. In the meantime, we have gathered over 1,000 written or oral statements in which students socio-analyse themselves. They look at their own lives and describe the patterns within which they grew up, which patterns were and are considered more or less suitable in their respective contexts (Schmitt 2015).

The feedback is largely positive, because the students often recognize themselves in each other's stories. This not only creates a lot of solidarity within the classroom, the students can also approach and get to know each other by criticizing structural aspects instead of individualizing potential conflicts. Conducting reflexivity for habitus structures among teachers is much more difficult.

ENK: You show, for example, how these different well-meaning exercises actually continue to stabilize exclusionary praxis because they do not reflect on the power dimensions that constitute them. Furthermore, you give an example of the influence of class on the lives of (*white*) students who are otherwise expected to line up with an academic habitus which they were most probably never taught or had no access to (because it is of course dependent on the background of the family, access to capital etc., i.e., class). In this example you suggest that a reflection of the students' different experiences and backgrounds is a possible catalyst for a self-reflection regarding privileges and the students locating themselves in the dominant culture (being part of the dominant culture is in itself is *the* hyper-privilege). I totally see how this can lead to a self-reflective process – I mean we must begin somewhere . . . I was wondering: How do you think that such a reflection process can be fostered across the different lines of intersecting privileges – when we think for example of ableism, racism, sexism? I was also wondering what strategies you can think of in order to get the attention of students in mainly technical subjects (social science students and gender studies students are more likely already aware when compared to engineering students, for example). I see how a class approach can be useful for (particularly) *white* students in getting

a first handle on reflecting about privilege. How would you get them to reflect on *white* privilege?

LS: I am conscious of the fact that I am acting within a kind of sociotope, and that in a university of applied sciences and a faculty that focuses on social issues certain things are possible which cannot easily be done in other contexts. However, there are experiences with self-socio-analyses with students from all faculties of our university (previously conducted with a small sample size) which is a quite fortunate case. With these analyses, I associate a methodological and emancipatory hope: When students are invited to look at their lives through the lens of habitus-structure reflexivity, milieu- and gender-specific habitus traits and their surrounding structures are mostly recognized, but hardly ever race and racism. This is, however, possible methodologically.

For this reason, Bourdieu's understanding of habitus is a very important instrument in my view, especially from an intersectional perspective. By using critical theory and postcolonial studies one can analyse the extent to which capitalism is colonizing, and how (following Foucault) the 'bad' becomes subjectified and how we become complicit of the structures. The use of queer-theoretical perspectives can further encourage deconstruction strategies. Nevertheless, the concept of habitus allows for social differentiation: Who is affected in what way by systemic colonization of the life worlds, by the struggle for recognition and by processes of subjectivation and so forth? Who has the power to determine discourse? An intersectional perspective becomes possible when one can examine, based on a single case, which elements of habitus are taken up, swallowed, appropriated or subtly rejected by which surrounding structural elements. By speaking about (intersecting) habitus elements, it becomes possible to name relations and practises of dominance without essentializing group identities.

In closing, it is important to me to highlight the difference between class status and social origin, because mixing up the two often leads to the obfuscation of power relations. However, both are of course closely related statistically.

In protest studies conducted on demonstrations, for example, social status often takes the form of economic capital, occupation and cultural capital (here mostly: formal level of education). In this category, there are barely differences when one looks at students, they have a similar social status. In a study conducted during the demonstrations against the introduction of university fees, heterogeneity was suggested, 'everyone' was protesting. When one delineates the social origins, however, it appears that students from non-academic households were much less likely to protest. Reasons for this difference cannot only be found in the realm of availability/lack of resources, but rather, in habitus. Here, participation is suggested where there was indeed none.

JH: Mike, what have your experiences been with regard to the intersectionality of race and class?

ML: It is often claimed that class is more or less invisible and that class-specific discrimination at the university would operate in a very subtle and invisible way, which makes it difficult to talk about. When we reduce class to such perceptions we encourage a phenomenon that Ngubia has already pointed out: The perceived invisibility of class only works if working class academics are imagined as *white*. Due to the symbolic order of racism at the university, the class origin of working/poverty class academics of Color is immediately visible.

Our above mentioned workshop at the University of Technology in Berlin was very important with respect to clarifying these differences in positional-ity that are closely related to racism.

As a gay working-class academic I experience structural disadvantage and subtle politics of shaming, insecurity and devaluation at the university. As a *white* male academic I am however privileged in society and at the univer-sity, and welcomed with open arms. My whiteness therefore cushions my class origin and reduces or even compensates for the impact of the problems I otherwise would have had in many spaces. If I put in some effort, I am able to benefit from academic passing, as a *white* man, at least on the outside because my inner conflicts and self-doubt cannot be read from the outside. I believe that these factors – besides the serious racist selection mechanisms which operate from the moment one applies to the university – are responsible for the fact that the typical working-class academic in Germany is *white* and cis-male, especially amongst professors. Racism and sexism present significant hurdles for academic passing and recognition as an academic personality within the culture of cis-male dominance that characterizes the university.

In our workshop it became clear that our working-class background was a common point of reference that led to conversations to identify similarities and chart collective courses of action. At the same time, hierarchies and differences also became visible, as well as varying degrees of precarization and experiences of discrimination. These variations have to be kept visible in order to avoid a universalization and homogenization within the class cat-egory. In short, I am not trying to do away with class as a category because it is more than an abstract concept that is useful in explaining correlations of capitalist sociality and dominance. I am simply suggesting that behind the category of class there are people who can invoke this very category for resistance and empowerment purposes, leading to the development of com-mon perspectives, the articulation of interests, the enlargement of collective spheres of action and organization.

All this can only occur on the condition that the ways in which social class relations within capitalism are intertwined with racism, coloniality and heteronormative gender relations are recognized. In the past few years, there has been a surge in research and debates at the university focusing on social class origins as a mechanism of exclusion after decades in which this topic was completely ignored and marginalized. We have to make sure that the ‘white-washing’ of the working-class that dominated debates and policy-making in the 1960s and the 1970s is not repeated or continued. We must therefore vehemently advance an intersectional expansion of this debate (as has been done in other countries) and a differentiation of concepts such as social origin or social class in the German-speaking debate. This is because it is very obvious that the social closure of German universities is taking place at a time when a large proportion of the national working class is increasingly constituted by people and families that are simultaneously viewed through racialized and ethnicized categories.

LS: At this point, I would like to return to the actor level. I asked myself if this historical process (apart from an isolated or at best combined analysis of class and gender, and towards more intersectionality) would correspond to a reflexive biographical process. I am trying to find out under which conditions people engage with particular dimensions of discrimination. The book ‘Returning to Reims’ by Didier Eribon (2016) got me thinking about these issues again. He discusses the consequences of his social background against the background of his mobility from the working class to the academic field, after analysing his biography, heteronormativity, and homophobic structures in relation to his own homosexuality. In summary, he demonstrates this by highlighting a theoretical shift from Foucault to Bourdieu. Of course, not even this can break the process of whitewashing (they are all *white* males!). Nevertheless, for me the question still arises as to whether dimensions of discrimination that are obviously connected to the recognition of identity must first be reflected and worked on along biographical experiences before the issue of distribution can be considered. As a habitus researcher however, I must emphasize that I do not quite agree with the dualization of identity and recognition on one side and distribution on the other side.

I have however noticed that my reflections on habitus and structural issues have begun expanding intersectionally only during the past few years, after my alleged identity as socially mobile (from working class child to academic), but also my material base, had stabilized. When I return to the level of actors here, I do not mean that I am ignoring structures inherent in habitus or the surrounding. For this reason, it is very important to me to speak not only of habitus sensibility, but of habitus-structure reflexivity.

THE ROLE OF FEELINGS IN POLITICAL PROCESSES

JH: Maybe we can engage more thoroughly with Lars' thoughts on self-reflection in relation to the question of collective organization which Mike also mentioned. Ngubia, do you want to comment on this suggestion?

ENK: Dear Lars, I completely see how the principles you name 'conservation through change' and 'obfuscation through transparency' function – that's a brilliant way to capture it and it fits into some of the issues I have raised with diversity and in/exclusion. I find it very empowering and insightful that you initiate the discussion by asking how a self-reflection of habitus and privilege can be catalysed and upheld within a student body that generally does not see or feel the necessity for this kind of reflection. How would such a program look like? The questionnaire idea you presented in your text is a good start. I am wondering, how can such processes be made inherent of the learning structure? Again, is it really possible to escape shame? I make a difference between shame and shaming. I see shaming as the intentional dishonouring of another human being coupled with an attitude of contempt towards that other person. Shame however is a psychological process, an embarrassment or the inadequacy that one feels after being aware that one's position or attitude/action/thought is beyond what is considered appropriate. As Grada Kilomba (2008) and Paul Gilroy point out, shame is a (necessary) step towards acknowledgement (of *white* privilege for example) and thus towards taking some responsibility to make necessary adjustments. I do not think that we can protect students from shame. I, however, think it is absolutely necessary to think about how we can constructively convey structures of discrimination to privileged others in a manner that honours the struggles of those confronted by the consequences of those privileged. I mean how we can make room for the feelings related to that process, without getting off course, that is, without providing room for disrespect and for shaming anyone? How should the violence of ignorance be managed? There has been a recent ongoing discussion that *white* professors and students feel that the prohibitions against using discriminating language are inhibiting their rights and freedoms, for example. I introduce this because I have been thinking about what safety and safe spaces mean, for whom and from what?

KNH: I find it helpful that Ngubia has pointed us to the difference between shame and shaming, but I am not sure if shame is necessarily a productive political learning process. The engagement with the systematic structure of whiteness as a societal norm should of course play an important role in academia and teaching. However, I do not know if feeling shame is necessary for acknowledging the existence of white privilege. An honest engagement with racism is always difficult, and is accompanied by complex psychological processes. The realization that one inadvertently profits from an unfair and repressive system can cause shame, but is this necessarily so?

Are those who feel shame about it any more anti-racist than those who reject white privilege, but are not (or cannot be) ashamed, because they cannot be held personally and directly accountable for this structure? Even more problematic is the normativity of shame: Can white people be anti-racist, if they do not feel ashamed of their privileges, but reject their privileges?

When it is fundamentally questioned whether white people can be anti-racist merely by rejecting their privilege . . . without feeling ashamed of their whiteness? I think that it is dangerous, when shame is combined with a normative expectation and value, as it complicates structures of emotional dependence: Because then, the search for absolution through allies and BPoC then becomes the centre of action for white people. In constellations where teachers of colour are working with white students, it is difficult to purposely create feelings of shame. The opposite normative constellation, that of a white professor teaching students of colour is of course more common, and presents challenges of its own, but that is another discussion entirely.

I am sceptical because the creation of shame for me is neither a pedagogical nor a didactical goal. Even as a means to an end, I still find it very problematic. Feeling shame is a very human thing, just like crying and is, as such, allowed. But one should not promote this gesture and in an act of normalization put some gestures over other ways of processing, especially not when acting as a lecturer. For me, the readiness to be accountable for one's own actions in society through empathy and knowledge should be at the centre of the learning process.

LS: I would like to add the following: First, I have often asked myself in which situations (within academia) and for whom my insecurity and shame is visible? I assume that these feelings do not always remain hidden or invisible, and that some others might see and even correctly interpret it for what it is, using social structures, habitus and power relations as lenses. Even if academic passing, as Mike has described it, may fail sometimes, it does not change anything with regard to whitewashing: On the contrary, it contributes to it.

Second, it is very important to me to describe how significantly feelings such as anger, shame, but also the accusation of being 'emotional' or intolerant are rooted in social structures and power relations. Even though every human being is capable of feeling shame as a psychologically explainable process, shame often arises when one notices or realizes that s/he has not acted in an adequate manner. In the rare case that the conflict is not individualized or pathologized, and the rules of engagement which always favour the dominant position are challenged by the affected person, the latter is often accused of being intolerant, emotional or even aggressive, because the obvious and say-able has been disrupted. Tolerance is always on the part of the dominant party in the interaction.

Third, I have also asked myself some of the questions that Ngubia has raised. Nevertheless, and here I agree with Nghi and Ngubia, I do not want to normalize shame and shaming, not as a pedagogical instrument of empowerment and not as a tool for development of political structures either, insofar as these two can even be separated. I have only asked myself what would happen in one of these intensive habitus-structure reflection workshops, when, for instance, racist structures are personalized.

Understandably, during a socio-analysis of the self, experiences of discrimination in which the self is discriminated against, or the structures within which such discrimination has occurred in the past are brought to the fore. A lot of solidarity and understanding can be expected in such spaces, as well as room for intersectional perceptions that remind me of those that Mike has already talked about. There are often attempts on the subjective level to think about the structural homologies of the dimensions of discrimination ('I had a similar experience, even though I don't have a migration background').

This can also lead to a whitewashing or neutralization, because even though such seminars have good feedback both in a qualitative and a quantitative sense, one cannot look into the minds of eighty people. I don't know what might be happening with regard to shame or shaming. For this reason, I would never propagate these seminars as a concept, but because of the positive feedback I can also not completely do away with them. However, we know from the analysis of faculty consultation services and other observations that individualization and psychologizing that Mike has also mentioned accompany the myth of excellence and the idea of equal opportunity.

I do not want to discredit the latter as a tool for dealing with conflicts, but habitus-structure reflexivity and related seminars have shown that a de-individualization and re-collectivization of a subjective experience of conflict does not only focus on political structures but can also be emancipatory on the subjective level, because this kind of analysis reduces the self-attribution of failure, and gives participants a sense of coherence.

JH: Returning to the question of shame, the issue of negative feelings has been discussed intensively in relation to queer politics, even though the context was different. For instance, there was a discussion on how forms of mobilization and empathy change when instead of a sense of pride – which today sometimes acquires a homonationalist note – feelings of shame are brought to the fore, feelings that the marginalized themselves are confronted with, as Lars mentioned in his contribution. In my view, these and other current debates around emotions and feelings show that feelings can indeed be constitutive of political processes and are not merely secondary effects accompanying the actual 'content' of discursive formations. Empathy, which Nghi brought into the discussion, can also be a problematic feeling that fosters othering and results in colonial forms of development aid, even though it

can also result – as Nghi has mentioned – in a deeper sense of accountability. However, just like Nghi, I have my problems with a normative conceptualization of shame as a politically necessary feeling, and this applies to ‘gay shame’ as it does to the shame of *white* people. How can other affects play a role in the engagement with one’s own racist entanglements? Here I have in mind a sense of sadness when one realizes that some borders between people just cannot be crossed, or of humour, when one of my friends of colour refers to me as *Kartoffelfreund* (potato friend), or even relief when one can finally take off the proverbial mask. Often, there is also a mixture of several feelings.

Ngubia’s thoughts on shame continue the discussion we had begun on defensive reactions and strategies of de-thematization. Here, I feel that there is great need for more engagement. Returning to the question of self-reflection: I have often experiences amongst *white* colleagues that when informed of their own entanglements in racism, they take it as a personal slight, and immediately become defensive. The creation of spaces of trust and solidarity in which critical engagement can take place becomes almost impossible. At the same time, I think that a richer landscape of feelings, beyond shame, might be encouraged by an intersectional or transversal understanding of political processes that apart from addressing privileges also aim at the articulation of common struggles. When I mention transversality, I think about the fact that apart from racialized groups, queer and trans people, or people with disabilities are especially targeted by biologicistic and race discourses (which is especially apparent in discourses around ‘degeneracy’). In reference to the university, could we maybe return to Mike’s thoughts on the simultaneous though very different effects of economization on various subjects?

ENK: I actually do not think that shame should be a pedagogical goal in individual interactions, and neither does feeling shame causally mean that *white* people necessarily react in a counter-racist manner. I am, however, convinced that some of the psychological processes taking place when *white* persons are confronted with their own privilege include shame, fear and guilt. This presents, in my opinion, one of the main hindrances towards a deeper self-examination of privilege and consequently in taking a stance against racism. Just because someone feels guilty does not mean that they will act anti-racist, absolutely not. In fact, the constellation of shame-fear-guilt only contributes towards developing psychological defence mechanisms such as denial, escapism and projection including de-solidarization as Jan notes above. I have recently been thinking about the role of love in reflecting on discriminations (I know I might sound utopic here, and my thought process is still raw and incomplete, so please show mercy, but I will nevertheless share a word or two). I do not think that the goal of anti-discrimination work should be to induce shame on those enacting discrimination. Rather, I think

that anti-discrimination work should instead help develop a heart's conviction and not a logical argumentation that sometimes remains on the surface.

As an example, during my work and time at the Humboldt University of Berlin I have observed just how many *white* students engage in anti-racist work. Most times because of guilt and shame (I think) coupled with the neoliberal motivation/conviction of equality. I am not suggesting that they have been insincere in their intentions, not at all. On the contrary, I think that they have been and continue to make an important contribution, putting their *white* privilege into anti-racist work. What I have, however, also come to observe is that many of these students sometimes do not know *why* and exactly *what* they are fighting *for*. And discriminations are so complex and multi-layered that a genuine heart conviction and heart concern for people, the individuals one intends to support would be necessary to navigate this stormy landscape. Everyone seems to be fighting against something, but no one is fighting for connection, for understanding each other, for moving forward together: We need to fight discrimination together. Instead, what I have repeatedly observed is a lot of internal conflict within and without groups of people who would have otherwise achieved great political change together.

What are we fighting for? Shame will not be a good motivation, and it only leads to further isolation. But how can we circumvent shame and instead open up reflected communication without being dishonest? How can love be a motivation and connection a goal? Love is a higher motivation for change than fear. That's what I am pondering on.

ML: I have frequently spoken and written about the political importance of love in processes of queer community building. One takeaway from this process was that love does not come about spontaneously (love refer here to a relational affection, not an individualized feeling). Love needs suitable conditions, and the same applies for the readiness to open up to and connect with each other.

This for me connects back to the problem of the economization of the university that Jan has repeatedly referred to. It is absolutely imperative to talk about the reproduction of racism, class relations and patriarchy on the level of everyday interactions and communication at the university. As a result we should also develop counter-strategies on this everyday level as well, so that the individual and collective spaces of agency expand and are better able to disturb, subvert and disrupt the reproduction of domination.

Simultaneously, I also think it is important to problematize and change the material and institutional structures within which academic communities and the social inner life of the university constitute themselves in practical ways. The economization of the university is not simply an abstract process of rationalization and the appraisal of cognitive and affective work, it is rather also a social technology that is reinventing the language and the sociality of

the university. The restructuring of academic time and space (the fluidity between work and life), the increasingly precarious and limited contracts and the competition for the few positions and resources that are available for academia cast the university as a social space that is characterized by existential crises, frustration, insecurity, overstraining, fear of failure, jealousy and so forth. Subjects of the neoliberal university are encouraged to develop individual coping strategies and resilience so that they can manage the feelings of hurt, excessive demands, and negativity. This is very consistent because academic careers are, under current conditions, conceptualized as individual and not collective affairs.

Phenomena like corporate feminism have shown that subjects that are negatively affected by structural discrimination are very likely to jump on the bandwagon, and to be used as driving forces of the neoliberal university and its ideology of meritocracy through individual performance. The basic principle that is used to pit subjects in academia against each other – the race for artificially scarce positions and resources – is not fundamentally threatened. In this way, the instrumentalization of this competition obscures the ways in which the neoliberal university mediates relations of power.

There is a symbiosis between racist and classist mechanisms of selection on the one hand, and the culture and sociability of an increasingly competitive, undemocratic and socially segregated institution on the other hand. I therefore think that it is important to put more emphasis – more than is done currently in my view – to the intertwining of discussions on economization and precarity in academia with the debates on institutional racism, classism and patriarchy.

JH: Encarnación, Ngubia, Lars, Mike, Nhgi, thank you for this intriguing exchange!

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Chapter 11

Decolonizing Development Studies: Pedagogic Reflections

Andrea Cornwall

Is it even possible to think about a decolonized development studies? Isn't the very idea unthinkable, the very juxtaposition of those two words an oxymoron? Until very recently, I was convinced that the inherent coloniality of development would make such a project impossible. All that was to be done, I thought, was to disrupt and discourage. I saw my small contribution to this in creating an educational experience for first-year international development students that would bring the development enterprise so completely into question that they could not go into it with their eyes shut. In fact, my ambition was to derail them completely from that particular journey. I would count my success in the numbers of students who woke up and switched courses, went into activism or took up careers in domains like community and youth work in the United Kingdom.

But I've changed my mind. In this chapter, I share what made that happen. Stuart Hall writes:

The 'post-colonial' signals the proliferation of histories and temporalities, the intrusion of difference and specificity into the generalising and Eurocentric post-Enlightenment grand narratives, the multiplicity of lateral and decentred cultural connections, movements and migrations which make up the world today. (Hall 1996, 248)

These words capture what I was seeking to do in the design of a new introductory first-year module for an undergraduate degree in international development: 'International Development: Ideas and Actors'. I wanted the students to think critically about the stories that are told about international development as narratives with their own temporalities and histories, and to locate themselves and their own perspectives and positionalities. With this, I would,

I thought, seek to reveal and explore the plurality of connections weaving through the lives of those taking and teaching the module, and those distant others evoked by the word ‘development’. In what follows, I locate part of my own story that brought me to this project of disenchantment, and go on to narrate how I took this into the classroom, how that experience changed me and what I learnt from it. In doing so, I reflect on some of the wider challenges of decolonizing the teaching of development studies.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH COLONIALITY

Like many of the white undergraduate students who come to Sussex to study international development, ‘Africa’ was a place I first came to know as somewhere in need to which I had something to contribute. Born in the period in which one African country after the next was gaining independence, I’d grown up in postcolonial Britain with a sensibility shaped by an early awareness that my white working-class English grandparents were racist. They lived in the middle of Handsworth, one of Birmingham’s most multicultural neighbourhoods. They’d seen more and more people from Britain’s imperial past fill the council houses like theirs. I felt their words about their black and brown neighbours, so full of prejudice and assumption, to be utterly, badly, wrong. I’m not sure where I got this from. I’d grown up in the white expanse of the north-east, knowing barely a single person of colour. But by the time I went to university, I considered myself anti-racist.

Whiteness and white privilege had not yet been part of my consciousness. My image of Africa was shaped by what I saw on TV. There were no books by African writers on our English literature curriculum, no facts about Africa in my history lessons. Africa was a place represented to me as lacking, vulnerable to natural disaster and the ravages of war, a country with wide open skies and plains and mountains and wild animals. I knew South Africa to be a Bad Place; like many of my generation, I’d marched against apartheid and protested against those who sustained it. But I had no real knowledge or understanding of the continent, or its history. I can’t remember where I got the idea from to go to Africa. I’d dropped out of university, was working in a restaurant in London and set my mind on earning enough money to get away from what was at the time the grimness of mid-1980s Britain. I chose Ghana, but was put off by a flirtatious gaggle of men behind the counter at the embassy. The only other people I knew who had been to Africa had gone to Zimbabwe. So that’s where I decided to go.

Arriving into the bright sunshine of the Zimbabwean summer, early in 1986, I’d looked around me and found an Africa very different from the place of my imagination. The main streets of Harare were lined with buildings that

looked like something out of an American Western, with their wooden balconies and long porches. Smooth tarred roads radiated out from the capital, through settlements that seemed like a chain of staging posts with the same kind of shops and houses, dots on a landscape of balancing rocks in acres of iridescent green. It seemed that most black Zimbabweans lived in what was euphemistically called ‘high density suburbs’. Zimbabwe’s whites lived in expansive bungalows, their interiors all chintz and little England. I wanted none of that. I met a white Irish volunteer teacher. She found me a job in her rural school, my whiteness enough of a qualification. I slept on a thin roll of foam on a cold concrete floor, cooked over a little paraffin stove and marked by candlelight. In the early morning light, we’d gather outside the school and neat rows of gingham-clad children would sing the national anthem, *Ishe Komborera*, as the teachers stood straight-backed to attention. And then the chants: ‘Up with progress!’ ‘Down with everything that gets in the way of progress!’ Educating the nation was the way to make change happen in a country where my forebears had stolen those chances from generations of African children. I was proud to be part of it.

The word ‘development’ wasn’t part of my vocabulary. What I was doing was education. I revelled in my work. I worked tirelessly, marking hundreds of books every week, each stroke of my red pen an act of care. A powerful combination of guilt and fury would come over me as I came face to face with the privileges I had from being born into whiteness in a country that sought global dominion, achieving this over a quarter of the planet’s land mass at the height of the British Empire. People from my country had shoved the forebears of these children off productive land. The masses were left without. Men’s education was just enough to create a generation of low-level clerks to administer colonial governance; hygiene and homecraft were administered to the thin stratum of women who had any access to the ‘benefits’ of development. A world apart, we were connected by this history.

I moved south to a school built in a rural area where there had been no access to education, to a building with walls but no books, crowded with children seeking a better future. I used my classes as an opportunity to create spaces for creativity in a school setting where rote learning and regular beating were the norm. I learnt that parents were keeping girls at home, fearful of them becoming pregnant. Visiting their mothers, I found them worried about something else as well: the pills that they’d been given by the community-based distribution agents. They were making some women have headaches, bloat, feel sick, miss periods. Medicine was supposed to make you well, not make you ill. These pills were supposed to free women from the uncertainties of their bodies, not become a source of pains and worries. Women sought my help assuming that as a white woman I must know. I was worried about these women. I was angry that they were not being given a choice of contraception.

I'd experienced the capricious effects of these pills in my own body. I felt a deep sense of injury that these black women saw me as someone whose knowledge was superior to theirs, someone who would have the power to give them answers simply because of the colour of my skin.

Seeing me walk from the borehole trying to balance a bucket on my head with none of the effortless grace of the women around me, women would comment that they'd always thought white women were not strong enough to carry things for themselves. They'd only ever seen them with people carrying their bags and boxes for them. Long walks in the hot sun were observed with surprise. People told me that they'd always thought white people were not able to walk very far, as they'd only ever seen them being driven around in cars or trucks. And they told me that I was so lucky. Wasn't it true that white women didn't suffer from period pains or have any pain in labour? I began doing all I could to make my white privilege visible, to demonstrate our shared humanity. Race and racism became part of my world in a way that they had never been before.

DISRUPTIONS

My engagement with development and my understandings of the term stem from these encounters. 'Ah, development!' the young men in the compound where I lived in Zimbabwe would crow when someone appeared with a new purchase like a pair of shoes, a cap, a bicycle; to them, *development* meant something tangible, progress through possessions. I came to understand development as reparative: trying to make good something that was broken or damaged, trying to make up for something that was bad or went bad. But I soon began to recognize that much of what is done in the name of development is extractive and exploitative, whether pouring aid into countries that might otherwise spill over into situations that would generate a tidal wave of refugees, 'stabilizing' regimes that might otherwise threaten access to oil and other resources or providing 'assistance' in the form of a gift that can't easily be refused and that costs the receiver more than they might ever have imagined.

By the time I arrived at Sussex University in 2010, I had lost sight of anything positive that could be said of development. I'd spent the best part of twenty years working on the margins of the development industry. The first task I'd had in the place where I'd worked for most of that time, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), an independent think tank located on Sussex University's campus, was running a session on gender on a training course for Indian civil servants. The course was called something like 'managing the public sector in a market economy'. There I was, touted as one of the white experts teaching brown elite administrators how to better manage their

public services in a vast and powerful country that my tiny little country had brought into its dominion and had been repulsed from fifty years earlier. IDS had been set up in the mid-1960s in the era of decolonization. When I joined, it had precisely one faculty member from the global South and subsisted on revenue derived largely from the British aid ministry. By the time I left, I'd tried all manner of ways of reframing development as resistance, explored every avenue for subverting my engagement with it. I'd come to a cul-de-sac and I simply did not have the imagination to think my way out of it.

In the autumn of 2011, I delivered my first lecture in what was then one of the largest of Sussex University's lecture theatres. It was packed with white students, with the tiniest presence of black British and international students. I asked how many of them wanted to work in development when they graduated: the answer was almost everyone. I came face to face with a generation of young people who had bought into the assistentialism peddled by British NGOs with their poverty porn, jamboree fundraisers and collection boxes. If Sussex produced almost 200 white and a dozen or so black, Asian and ethnic minority undergraduate students seeking employment in the development industry every year, plus those on our expanding MA programmes, were we not guilty of feeding the rapacious coloniality of the development industry with new blood? And, if that was the case, what on earth was there to be done?

I wanted, in ten brief weeks, to put as many of them off careers in the development industry as possible. I took my mission seriously. I'd been asked initially to do things in a manner in which I was neither familiar nor comfortable: to give a fifty-minute lecture to almost 200 students, and for a team of doctoral student assistants to then take the students off in groups for hour-long seminars. I found this way of working totally alienating. Students were the passive consumers of my edu-tainment. The 'real' teaching – critical questioning, exploration, dialogue – took place out of my reach in those small seminar groups. After a year, I jumped at the opportunity to be part of an experiment with interactive lecturing, using it to create giant two-hour workshops and to dispense with both lecture and seminar.

I wanted to get the students thinking critically about what the term 'development' was used to signify and to interrogate the meanings that they and each other gave it. I began by giving them the work of two older white men to read, Gilbert Rist and Robert Chambers. Their messages were diametrically different. Students were asked to read, think, react and write their own short reflective piece on 'what is development'. Rist's (1997) history of development situates the industry as one overripe for its own demise. I chose not Chambers' books *Putting the Last First* (1983) or *Putting the First Last* (1997a), but an article on what he called 'responsible wellbeing' (Chambers 1997b), a term he had tried – without much success – to mobilize

as a development buzzword. Rist was relentlessly negative, with good reason; Chambers was relentlessly optimistic, also with good reason. It was interesting to see the students grapple with the contradictions of juxtaposing these readings, provoked in the process to think about the subject positions of these two men. I subsequently invited Robert Chambers into the lecture theatre to reflect on how being a colonial district officer provoked him into a career waging combat against hierarchies of knowledge and power. I created ‘Wordles’ – pictures composed of words of different sizes by the frequency of mentions – out of fragments from the websites of development institutions. I got the students to guess who was who, deconstructing these organizations’ use of language in the process. I accompanied this with a home-made cluster of video clips of colleagues from all over the world defining ‘development’, including one Ghanaian colleague for whom development was a business that was simply there to make money out of other people’s miseries.

The next move was to give the students a pungent whiff of history. Sussex is unique in offering a module called ‘Colonialism and After’ to all of those studying International Development and Geography, a legacy of the legendary AFRAS, the School of African and Asian Studies, with its powerfully radical take on the history, geography, literature, economics and fortunes of previously colonized countries. ‘Colonialism and After’ introduces students not just to the ravages of the British Empire in Africa and Asia but also the oppression and genocide of indigenous peoples in Australia and the Americas. As a complement to what students were learning this module, I focused in the second session of the term on the history of the development industry. I scotched the myth that development was a post–World War II enterprise, getting the students to read the 1929 Colonial Development Act, dip into debates in the British Parliament from that period¹ and reflect on what it might mean to classify countries as ‘lacking responsible government’.

We traced alternative histories and narratives of development, exploring counter-narratives to that of development-as-progress. I divided the students into groups of ten, and assigned them a period in history from 0 AD onwards. Each group had the task of coming up with development-related historical facts and processes: invasions, discoveries, crises. With flip charts and marker pens, crouched in the aisles of the lecture theatre, they created visuals that became a timeline of colonizations, advances and disasters. Arranged in time sequence, the flip charts lined the walls of the lecture theatre; prompted to pick out the most surprising and interesting reflections, students came to confront development’s presentism and the convenient fiction of its post–World War II origins. This allowed us to bring into view ancient India, Egypt and Zimbabwe, with the contributions they have made to mathematics,

1 See, for example, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/acts/colonial-development-act-1929>.

medicine, engineering, philosophy and literature, as well as place within history the colonization of our own small island by Christianity in the early centuries of the first millennium and the reverberations of the slave trade, its terrible history insistently linked to Britain's own development.

The next step was to locate the development industry. I began with slide after slide of numbers, painting with them pictures of the flows of money that are constitutive of its geopolitical dynamics. A slide comparing 'official development assistance' (ODA) with 'official aid' (OA) brought gasps of surprise as we considered the way that Western governments use transfers of resources and learnt that the top recipient of U.S. aid, by a significant amount, is Israel, consisting entirely of military assistance which can still be described as 'aid' under the definition of OA. Another slide showing the relative balance of remittance income, private investment and development aid prompted us all to think about where money from outside a country goes, to what and to whom. I downloaded the spreadsheet with the UK Department for International Development's aid spend and crunched it, highlighting the flows of resources to major consultancy consortia and the big global accountancy corporations. These pictures became artefacts for us to reflect on.

I showed the class two YouTube clips produced by the British and American official aid institutions, DFID and USAID. One was an advert featuring ordinary people in London guessing how much money is spent on aid, then discovering that it's not as much and being reminded that it is being spent on vaccinating children and sending them to school. I contrasted this with the breakdown from the OECD database of where Britain spends its aid, noting the substantial sums being channelled into securitization and private sector development, amidst shrinking social spending. The other was a promo video for USAID, with diverse employees announcing the many things the U.S. government funds, with no mention of the fundamental premise of the 1961 U.S. Foreign Assistance Act that U.S. aid must serve the national interest. I then dipped into a longer film about British investment in biofuels in India that shows how, in a manner grotesquely reminiscent of the occupation of lands in Britain's settler colonies, the private companies funded by the British government colonized arable lands with an inedible crop that strangled all else.² The hungry, disenfranchised villagers had their own story of 'development' to tell.

A week considering the role of governments as development actors reminded students that it wasn't just foreign NGOs, donors, companies and banks that did 'development'. I took the students on a journey that started with the white male political theorists – J. S. Mill, Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, Adam Smith, Kropotkin, Marx, Thomas Paine – who frame so much

2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-l6YZCuKM2Q>.

of the way in which the West has come to think about the state, unpeeling the assumptions associated with them and with representations of governments in previously colonized countries. I gave them readings from the ‘grey literature’ on governance that constitutes an in-all-but-name continuation of colonial intervention. One of my slides showed state formations over a century, tracing the legacy of imperial rule through into contemporary governance interventions by European colonial and U.S. imperial powers. This allowed us to reflect on the role of colonialism in the creation of states as well as in the construction of governments, from the carving up of Africa by a bunch of white men in a late-nineteenth-century Berlin meeting room to the origins of the Panchayati Raj system in British colonialism. This enabled me to explore with them how the forms of governance that existed in the present were products of a colonial past, and to locate development’s governance discourse historically.

I set the students the task of going into Brighton and taking a photo that symbolized what the state meant to them, uploading their pictures to a Facebook site. These photos bore witness to the state vanishing before our eyes: one year, the distinctive red post boxes of the Royal Mail appeared on many photos, the next, we were coming to terms with yet another privatization. Photos of things we’d taken for granted as standing for the state came into question as we considered the implications of outsourcing. I’d made what I’d come to call ‘Looking for the State’ a game I played when I visited new places; being attentive to the way the state presented itself allowed me to see these places through a different lens. Teaching it to my students provided us an opportunity to think about the promotion of neoliberalism internationally, including through the governance and private sector development agenda of our own governments. Reflecting on today’s insecurities from this perspective, we asked again: what role can the state play in development? And from this, through a turn to institutional experiments in radical democracy in Brazil to the use of participatory budgeting and community organizing in the neighbourhoods of Chicago, we brought development ‘home’.

We then moved on to consider the role of NGOs, and specifically, the role of Western charitable organizations with whose marketing materials many students in the class were so familiar. Later in the term, we were to come back to those materials with a class on representing abjection. For now, though, the students were simply tasked with researching an NGO for their homework, paying close attention to the language and framing used in their online presence. We turned to looking at the role of social movements as agents of change, telling stories of mobilization and the power of organizing, as well as cautionary tales of NGOization squashing the life energy out of people’s desire to come together to make change happen. And then it was onto a class on the private sector, introducing students to the contrasts between the

corporate PR spin story of a global brand and the denial of pensions and erosion of workers' rights to those working for the same corporation back home in the United Kingdom.

The next step was to take a series of development dilemmas and look at them through a critical historical lens. We returned to themes raised earlier in the course. Perhaps the most pertinent dilemma of all was that of whether aid does harm or good. Bringing into view the very possibility that something that is well intentioned might be a source of negative outcomes is in itself challenging. But to consider, alongside this, whether it might be better to advocate for an end to aid altogether unsettles the very impulse to 'assist' that underpins some of the most colonial dynamics of the business of aid. We tackled this full on. For all that her solutions might be problematized, Dambisa Moyo's (2010) diagnosis of the problem is compelling even to the non-economist. It struck a chord with many of the students. I contrasted her vision of the role of business – with videos of her being flown in by Rwandan president Paul Kagame and appearing on TV debating with figures from the UK aid establishment – with a YouTube video of Ugandan journalist Andrew Mwenda talking about the role of taxation in creating a citizenry who would hold their own governments to account for corruption. This brought other representations of Africa into the frame: as a vast diverse continent with abundant resources, including brains and vision. I introduced the students to other prominent African analysts, via TED Talks and YouTube, amplifying their commentaries on economics, the role of the private sector and the state and the stultifying effects of aid. I supplemented this with readings from the live domain of the internet rather than the mainly white authorities whose work remains trapped behind the paywalls of commercial journals.

CREATING UNDERSTANDING TOGETHER

I've come to see decolonial practice as not only about what is conveyed but also about pedagogy and above all about decentring the academy as the only site for expert knowledge and the eclipse of other forms of knowing. The module was deliberately anti-academic in its approach to knowledge, something that would cause me much criticism from colleagues. My aim was to encourage the students to have, and to own, opinions; I wanted them to feel able to be critical of everything, rather than slavishly copying out quotes and trailing through literatures that imprinted on their minds a correct way to think, know and write.

In week one, I asked each student to set up their own WordPress site, write a blog entitled 'what is development?' and put it online. It was scary for the students. The academy privatizes assignments. Each student produces their

own version. It is submitted. It is marked. A grade is received, together with comments for improvement that few, if any, students do anything more than skim read. I set about breaking with this. And students got into it. I told them that they did not only need to write. They also needed to find visuals, a photo or video clip, that spoke to what they were trying to convey in their blog posts. This led to an explosion of creativity: beautifully designed blogs with photos taken of artefacts the students had made for themselves, a face painted with development buzzwords or a distorted globe made of paper money. I created an interactive spreadsheet with all the links to the blogs on it, put them into groups, encouraged them to read and peer review each other's blogs, leaving comments, suggesting improvements. I held writing clinics to which they could bring their blogs-in-the-making for peer critique. They watched me, gripped, while I narrated comments on the blogs I was passed one by one on students' laptops.

It got us thinking together. I wrote my own blog posts to accompany those my class were writing. One transposed reflections on whiteness, inequality and dignity from my days in Zimbabwe onto a trip to the UN in New York at the height of the Black Lives Matter movement.³ Another was about the hypocrisy of the corporate NGO headquartered in an immaculate, extravagantly designer-chic building, with 'poverty' and 'suffering' etched into expensive glass room dividers, corporate touches like a table football table and a map of their dominion charting their reach into previously colonized countries: all touches, in my view, of the pervasive coloniality of the entire enterprise.⁴ I lampooned those who benefitted from the industry, confessing my own complicity and giving the students that damning poem 'The Development Set' to read.⁵ I even produced my own little spoof film of Annabel the consultant jetting off to Tanzania to do a consultancy when snow closed the campus one week.

I was assigned a doctoral teaching assistant each year because of the size of the cohort. I got them involved as facilitators, giving them a slot to do a session on a contemporary dilemma of their own choosing. One year Ana Porroche brought to the module her interest in the role of celebrities, another year Tom Chambers explored the migration crisis in Europe. Althea Rivas brought a perspective on decolonizing learning that transformed mine. I learnt a lot from working with them; they played an important role in contact with the students, running office hours to discuss students' questions and meet their technological needs, commenting on blogs and reflecting with me on how it was all going as we drew on what was being written in the blogs to assess

³ <https://developmentdissident.wordpress.com/2015/01/06/respect-solidarity-justice-humanity-end-white-supremacy-now/>.

⁴ <https://developmentdissident.wordpress.com/2014/10/21/hello-world/>.

⁵ <https://morenewsfromafar.wordpress.com/2012/01/27/the-development-set-by-ross-coggins-2/>.

what and how the students were learning. So often, marking is done in a perfunctory way at the end of what is being taught, rather than being regarded as a rich source of learning material for the teacher. By engaging with students' work throughout the module, we adjusted the way we worked in the space of the interactive lecture and the support we offered the students with their reading, writing and reflection. Their blogs were fascinating, offering us a window into their worlds.⁶

CONCLUSION: THINKING GLOBALLY, ACTING LOCALLY

Once we'd picked apart the development industry and its perverse effects, what we were left with was the same reality that had brought students, in their hundreds, to study development in the first place: an unfair, unequal world in which millions of people have no access to education, shelter, food, sanitation, health care and the basic necessities of life. Development may be a word that is both overstuffed with meaning and full of empty promises. But it's also one that promises a better world than we live in now, and one that captures the imaginations of so many young people fired with passion for change. I had fallen prey to conflating development with the development industry, to lumping together every possible kind of external development actor into a single problematized category, weaving them into a narrative of encroachment in which their promotion of development became a predation on the dignity, integrity and life worlds of those they sought out as their subjects. But in doing so I lost sight myself of what had seduced me into my own engagement with development.

With each year, I shuffled more and more of the development industry sessions off the module. We stopped being mired in what was wrong, and started engaging more with what makes change happen. A leadership role got in the way of my teaching, and I was forced to wind up my engagement with the module. The very last time it ran, I focused an impromptu final session on a practical exercise of identifying solutions to global issues. I divided more than a hundred students into teams of five to six, sent them off with flip charts and marker pens to design an intervention that could change the world, promising rewards of chocolate and a small amount of funding to help make their idea happen if they came up with anything we could act on locally. The creativity of the students was striking, and beautiful. None of their solutions

6 For some examples, see Felicia Lomotey's <https://delusionaldemocracy.wordpress.com/>; Molly Scott's <https://internationaldevelopmentstudiesblog.wordpress.com/>; Jordan Isaac's <https://jisaa-cblogs.wordpress.com/2017/07/18/why-are-we-losing-faith-in-development-aid/>; Anoush Rajabian's <https://internationaldevelopment379.wordpress.com/blog/>.

resembled the coloniality of all we had rejected. They had left it completely behind. Most focused on ecological interventions we could make in our own campus. One group advocated a co-operative garden project that could provide vegetables to students on the campus, taking over the perimeter of the campus as an extended allotment. Another proposed a network of green spaces to run across the flat roofs of our 1960s campus. Another still came up with a decolonizing cultural intervention, taking a narrative of pluriversality to youth across the nation to combat the myths propounded by the NGO pity industry.

Reframing development in this way as a global quest for social, gender, racial and ecological justice makes it as relevant to the people sleeping on the streets in Brighton and subject to racial or homophobic abuse in our streets as to the abject child portrayed in NGO marketing campaigns. From here it is possible to see what a decolonized development studies might look like. It would focus on understanding the makings of the modern world as a process deeply inflected by the colonization of minds as well as lands, with indelible marks on world history, including in places that were never part of the colonial dominion or colonizing project. It would seek out and situate attempts to change the world for the better, locating them not in the narrative of intervention, but in one that includes insurrection.

Rather than be cynical about Britain's promise to 'leave no-one behind' as it signed up to the global goals,⁷ this generation of students could insist on taking it literally, and using it to drive change in the way Britain treats its black and Asian citizens, in Britain's immigration policy, in the mortal threat the government poses to our welfare state, in this time of Brexit and rising xenophobia. By expanding understandings of development beyond planned intervention and subsuming within the very idea of development a constellation of processes of social change, students could then claim their own part in making the future without needing to attach themselves to perpetuating the colonial project. They could do this by stepping away from where they are currently positioned to explore the world of possibilities that global development offers, learning about how change happens and what can serve as impetus and as sustenance in that process. Then they could harvest that understanding, bring it back to their own neighbourhoods, their own cities, their own countries. If teaching development studies could be about transformative education that ignited a generation of global citizens who were unafraid to look deeply at the causes of injustice, come to terms with their own privilege, and learn how to listen and act with compassion and humility, I can't help thinking the world would be a better place.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leaving-no-one-behind-our-promise/leaving-no-one-behind-our-promise>.

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Chapter 12

Teaching Post Development as a Tool for Transformation

Wendy Harcourt

I realized that every aspect in our day-to-day life and activities is a form of development or means to development. (Student 2015 Q2.4 S2)¹

The chapter is a contribution to the collective learning process of decolonizing the academe. I share my reflections on teaching, and experiments in critical pedagogy. The aim was not to teach the orthodox canon but to start from the experiences, knowledges and ‘development encounters’ of the students themselves. In this approach, I am inspired by feminist writers such as Donna Haraway (1988) and Giovanna Di Chiro (2017). I share with them the importance of situated knowledges – produced by particular actors in a specific geographic and historical setting – along with a commitment to Freire’s notion of education as ‘critical consciousness’ where students are producers of knowledge along with teachers.

This chapter reflects on the first years (2015–2018) of using post development (PD) as a tool to engage international students in critical reflections on development in the MA General Course of the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in the Netherlands.² The essay considers both the possibilities and the difficulties of using PD in a global North institute where most of the students are from the global South. The course uses PD along with decolonial and feminist pedagogies to engage students in the ‘making, unmaking and remaking’ of development. The aim of the course is to create a space for reflection and dialogue among peers and teachers that extends the students’ understanding of development in and beyond the classroom.

1 Throughout the chapter, I refer to students’ comments coming from the evaluation of the first version of the course in 2015. As all the comments were anonymous, I have referred to them by a Question (Q) and a number (S) that refers to the order of the student answers.

2 The chapter is a reworking of an earlier version of the chapter published in the *Third World Quarterly* (Harcourt 2017).

The chapter explores ‘the doing of’ PD through teaching practices as a story of learning (and unlearning) for both teachers as well as students. It is inspired by the pedagogical philosophy of Paulo Freire (2000) where teachers are seen as cultural workers and students are intellectuals and practitioners and our goal is to make classrooms spaces that encourage investigation, cooperation and critical dialogue.

The chapter also tells a personal story about creating transgressive spaces (hooks 2014) in teaching institutions. The chapter connects my self-reflections on teaching to wider political and social understandings of education. I am interested in the politics of teaching critically about mainstream development processes as a contribution to help dismantle the deep colonial and Eurocentric biases of the global ‘development project’ (McMichael 2012). The chapter is a story of how challenging it is to unsettle truths of mainstream development in places like ISS which has a long history at the interface of activism and academe as well as a colonial legacy.³ It is also a contribution to this historical moment in academe where the domination of curriculum by ‘dead white men’ (DWM) is being questioned, and there are lively academic debates about decolonizing the university the Eurocentrism of university courses (Icaza 2015).⁴

My approach to the course is inspired by and aspires to Freire’s view of education as ‘the practice of freedom – the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world’ (Freire 2000, 34). I see students as deeply learning from each other’s stories and the course as a way to gain skills of self-reflection and compassion when they hear about other’s experiences, accomplishments and the challenges they have faced. I see the teacher’s role as mentoring and guiding students in co-productive collaborations, reflecting a commitment to education that is interdisciplinary, experientially grounded and culturally diverse.

In spelling out this approach to the course I am ‘situating’ the teaching as a form of knowledge inspired by the edited collection on PD by Ziai (2007). Following this debate, I reflect on the highly political process of teaching institutions asking what counts as knowledge, who has the authority to teach, in which language, from which history (Icaza and Vazquez 2016). I consider this ‘reflexive turn’ (Kobayashi 2003) on pedagogy welcome if also problematic as it demands courage to scrutinize your own complicity in the power relations that go on in the classroom (Icaza 2015).

³ It was one of the five Dutch institutions set up post World War II in 1952, announced to the UN by the then Queen Juliana in the UN to train students from former colonies in social sciences.

⁴ As I write this chapter, there is a steady stream of articles, blogs and letters about the University of Cambridge seeking to decolonize its curriculum. See, for example, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/30/perspectives-on-decolonising-and-diversifying-english-teaching> (accessed 1 November 2017).

As well as based on my own reflections, the material used in the chapter comes mostly from the students' experiences recorded in the formal evaluations of the first year of the course.⁵ In addition, I quote from the students' essays and the videos they produced in the other years of the course.⁶ I also refer to internal group discussions of students and staff and particularly to internal teaching review surveys.⁷ In addition to course evaluations, a survey was sent out early in 2017, two years after the first course, to the first set of facilitators and students. This yielded reflections about their pedagogical experience in ISS and their thoughts on the impact of PD in their current working lives.

Section 1 describes how the course is designed and the pedagogical methods using PD as a tool to understand development encounters, in the different versions of the course, in particular peer learning. Section 2 analyses the responses of the students to the course along with my own. I reflect on the teaching as a process of 'unlearning' and on what kinds of transformation and transgression were possible. Section 3 analyses the strategy to use PD as tool for teaching. I examine the continuing challenge for development studies to be progressive given the backdrop of dwindling resources as well as broader pessimism about increasing global inequalities, economic and ecological failures.

THE ISS GENERAL COURSE 'THE MAKING OF DEVELOPMENT' OR 'MOD'

The course is taught at the ISS in The Hague, the Netherlands, one of the most well-known European postgraduate development studies institutes. Founded

5 There is some quantitative information about the students in the first year of the course. In terms of nationality and gender of the students, 19.5 per cent of the students were from Latin America, 29 per cent from Africa, 40 per cent from Asia, 7.6 per cent from Europe, 2.6 per cent from the Middle East and 1.3 per cent from North America; 39 per cent were men and 61 per cent were women (no other gender identity was registered). The majority of the students were in their thirties (53 per cent) with 20 per cent in their twenties and the rest over forty. There was one student with disabilities. In the additional survey, twenty students were contacted and twelve responded – 25 per cent European, 25 per cent Asian, 25 per cent Latin American, 25 per cent African.

6 Most of the quotes from students come from a detailed Final Course Evaluation held on 1 February 2016 before the grades were released organized by one of the ISS staff using a computer-generated EvaSys package. A total of 126 students answered the survey. The selection of the quotes is from a study of all thirty-one pages as well as online written reports. As the entry is a personal anonymous reflection, it was not possible to differentiate which students said what. I selected the most articulate comments.

7 Drafts of the TWQ piece were shared with a selection of 152 students and 16 teaching staff and facilitators involved. A short version of the piece was also presented at the Development Studies Association Conference in Oxford in September 2016. The original results of the second survey were summarized in the ISS magazine *Dev Issues* (October 2017). I take full responsibility for the views expressed here.

in 1952, ISS has been for most of its history an independent institute funded by the Dutch government to do capacity building and postgraduate education, as well as research, pioneering a number of critical development courses over the years.⁸ In 2009, ISS joined Erasmus University, Rotterdam. As a result, there is now less emphasis on capacity training courses in the global South, and more research-led teaching and a growing emphasis on winning large research grants. The focus of ISS is now more firmly anchored within mainstream academe, competing on various levels with other universities in Europe for students and funding, though a strong emphasis on societally relevant research and scholar activism remains.

The ISS master in development studies currently takes fifteen months and there is a period, where ‘batches’ of students overlap as one group begins the course and the other completes their master’s thesis. The General Course, known by students as ‘MoD’ is taught in this overlapping period, is the only obligatory course that all the students take as a form of ‘orientation’ to the ISS approach to development studies. The large majority of students are from the global South. During the three years, the intake ranged from 152 to 170 students from 52 to 57 different countries. The majority of students have scholarships, and many take a year off from jobs in government, NGOs and universities to do the master’s degree.

The course is not the first time PD was taught at ISS but it was the first time it was the main pedagogical tool for the only compulsory course at ISS. The course takes place over twelve weeks with lectures, workshops, using an online platform as well as social media to communicate. The course is co-taught. The teaching team is made up of a group of academic staff (six to eight members) and a group of ‘old batch’ MA students (nine to twelve) who are hired to facilitate the workshops. There are two weekly lectures (co-taught by the teaching team) and a weekly workshop facilitated by the ‘old batch’ MA students and continuous online discussion groups. The course uses participatory methodology, and where possible flips the classroom in order to encourage dialogue and to create space for students to speak about their own knowledge and experience of how they understood economic development processes as societal improvement.

During the lectures, there is space for questions, as well as dialogue and interactive debate often using films and online quizzes. More in-depth discussions happen in peer-learning processes, both on- and offline, in the working groups facilitated by the old batch MA students. There is a general online discussion group for all teachers and students as well as group discussions. The course material and general communication is hosted on an e-learning-platform which migrated from Moodle to Canvas between the second and

8 For more on ISS, visit http://www.iss.nl/about_iss/.

third year. The focus on online dialogue and interaction has left a digital trail of discussions and debates as well as films used and produced during the course. In addition, there are regular internal reviews after each module by the teaching team with the facilitators (held in a social environment over three evenings in my home) and there have been two external reviews.

Two texts play a particularly important role in the teaching: *Encountering Development* (Escobar 1995/2012) and *The Development Dictionary* (Sachs 1992/2010). These have guided the lectures and assignments. Escobar is used as the text to introduce the PD ‘turn’ and to introduce the third module on ‘alternatives to development’. Sachs is used as a model for the group assignment and final essay. Students work in groups of ten or less in order to prepare, write and present five entries for an ISS General Course Development Dictionary. Each group is asked to give a five- to seven-minute pitch to the audience in plenary in the form of a video. The videos are intended to show an understanding of development as a cultural, political, economic and historical process using the concepts from the course. The resulting films are referred to and viewed by the next generation of General Course participants. For the final essay, the student selects one of the concepts and writes up an individual Development Dictionary entry.

Students' responses to the course – Turning the world upside down?

I don't know, I feel like I have not learned anything in this class, besides questioning everything and everyone, which is useful . . . but now what?
(Student 2015 Q 7.3 S 74)

In the first year, such were the pressures of setting up a new course that the teaching team met every week, continually adjusting the course, the readings and the approach. We began by flipping the classroom which meant asking students to read the texts, watch (music) videos related to the themes before the lecture and began each session with a video of a song and ‘buzz’ groups where students divided into groups of two and three to discuss issues raised. We co-taught, taking time to tell students who we were, where the authors they were reading came from, what institutions and backgrounds produced these texts (academia World Bank, NGOs, social movements), where the places and people were situated in the development debates. We began the course by presenting development as a highly contested term. We spoke about the different and conflicting explanations of development – why travelling along roads, migrants, funerals and mobile technologies were an important part of the material development process to be criticized and understood culturally. We asked them to see the course as discussing partial truths of development in order to challenge the homogenizing nature of the

dominant development project. We taught that there were many understandings of development. We pointed to the conflicts, contradictions and potential cracks in these understandings, including our and their own. We wanted them to learn from each other's views of development by sharing their own experiences. We saw ourselves together with the students as co-producers of knowledge in the classroom. It was exciting for some, but the response was decidedly mixed. Some met the whole process of the course (its approach and content) with disbelief and confusion followed by demands for the facts and figures and the 'real development' story. These students did not want to be part of an experiment. They wanted the teachers to tell them what development was about; they had not come to the ISS to 'just' discuss with other students'. Some of the negative responses about the course revealed this:

Go back to the old way of teaching, it may help us learn much more (Student 2015 Q 7.4 S 22) or

I still do not get most of the materials in the course. Workshops must help us to understand, instead of doing nonsense things. (Student 2015 Q 7.4 S 25)

Some of the responses were due to the fact that students coming from fifty-seven countries have experienced very different pedagogical processes. The ones that were bemused by our approach came from backgrounds where teachers taught and students listened, and knowledge was from books not songs or videos or stories. For them flipping the classroom in the lectures and the use of interactive pedagogy was bewildering. As the course progressed, we decided to integrate a more standard teaching format in the lectures while keeping a participatory and transgressive peer-led pedagogy in the workshops. We were responding to comments such as this one:

I think students should be better prepared for what to expect from this course – the structure of the course came as a surprise to them and was frustrating and bewildering for many as this is not a style of learning with which they are familiar. (Student 2015 Q7.3 S 36)

Two moments from the course

Reflecting on how the course has changed I would like to share two moments. I was about to leave the classroom after an early lecture in the first year of the course 2015. A female student in her mid-thirties (who I later found out was a business consultant from Colombia) came up to me and said, 'You have turned my world upside down'. I felt troubled but somehow pleased to hear it. It has become a refrain I heard throughout the course ranging from thanks to accusation.

A second moment is in October 2017 during a review session when teachers and facilitators meet in an informal environment to review the course. As we sat around my living room eating spicy pumpkin soup and reflecting on the module ‘economic narratives of development’, I began to realize that the course had settled. No longer were there questions about why question development, why not more facts and figures – but rather how to improve dialogues and communication, to be sure issues such as race were spoken about, whether students were ready for the Development Dictionary exercise and which concepts people will use. Facilitators were anticipating how to be sure students could ‘really get into dialogue among themselves’. As I sat scribbling notes on how lecturers could improve delivery, how best to flip the next session using the new platform of Canvas, I took the courage to ask: ‘this is all great – but are they enjoying the course do you think?’ The answer came back: for some it was the best course they had ever taken. Maybe not for all, but something was working; indeed in 2018–2019, the course has been expanded with four more afternoon sessions on Encounters in Development Studies.

Listening to critical student responses

Name two things you learnt from the course

The source, origin and birth of the word and concept of ‘development’ and the way it has been contextualized. Development differs from place to place due to or based on the background of a particular place as well as social, economic and political factors. (Student 2015 Q2.4 S 55)

The course provided other perspectives on seeing development narratives. That there is no single story about development. People live in different spaces, cultures and times, so that we have to be more critical when doing development agendas. (Student 2015 Q2.4 S 78)

As these two student responses suggest, the course aims to provide students with the tools to examine critically the making, unmaking and alternatives to the development project. In this approach, we present PD as allowing us to examine the many stories or narratives of development. We follow Escobar in understanding development as an ‘extremely efficient apparatus for production about and exercise power over the Third World’ (Escobar 2012, 9). We take different examples of the practices of development and modernity by using PD as a tool to look at how power operates in development processes. The process of becoming like ‘developed countries’ is critiqued as profoundly Eurocentric, universalizing and hegemonic but also in this process we propose ways to create spaces for transformation and change. We ask students to look at ‘alternatives to development’ inspired by alternatives

to development at the local level, which we ask students to construct from their own experiences.

In the first year of the course, the concept of glocality was introduced as a major concept. Glocality defines processes of change as glocal phenomena, involving transactions and flows at very large scales but also necessarily defined by context and the particularities of place. By the second and third course, we shifted away from glocality to talk about people and places. We explore how place constitutes people's experience of development and encourage students to look at their own experience of place and people in order to understand how modes of domination both at global and local levels operate. We look at how diversities and difference inform and build resistances to development interventions that are then dynamic and fluid over time and space rather than place bound. We use Katherine McKinnon's definition of PD not as a 'cohesive movement' but rather as a 'set of debates . . . grounded in a particular way of thinking about the nature of truth and knowledge' (McKinnon 2011). We teach PD as a critical conceptual stance in order for students to rethink the way they have experienced and observed development in their lives, and in sharing those experiences to think together about new narratives.

In the first year, we understood that the questions and silences indicated that the dominant development concept for some of the students was difficult to question, and to see as a set of narratives. For them development was about 'underdeveloped' countries learning how to follow the development path to progress, modernity, success and wealth. The tools they asked for were not critical theory but practical information about how to do development better back home in their governments, NGOs and business, so they and their country could benefit. They were inscribed within development discourse in ways that made it difficult to look at it critically. They did not see the value of discussing experiences, ideas and diverse narratives; they wanted to know how development worked, not to change it, but so that they could, once home, make it work better, in particular for the poor.

The first set of essays, inspired by Escobar, were telling. We asked students to reflect on their own experience of development, assuming that students coming to study at ISS would welcome the chance to share their own history and colonial experience and then, as a course, we would learn from their 'encounters'. We watched YouTube videos such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 2009 speech 'The Danger of a Single Story'⁹ and invited them to tell their own.

⁹ https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en (accessed 5 November 2016).

Some students wrote brilliant essays, voyages of discovery and curiosity about how to use PD as a tool to unpack assumptions. Extracts from four essays give examples of how they understood encounters in development.

One deeply felt essay spoke about the metaphor ‘don’t cross the river before you get to the bridge’ and at how ‘culture’ is essential in the making of development. She argued how culture is critical to understanding how to unmake and remake *the meaning of development and then through our practices and in the context we live* (Student Essay B, November 2015).

Another student wrote an evocative essay about his/her travels across histories and landscapes on his/her way to the ISS, reflecting on the contradictions of development encounters in his/her life, concluding,

I arrived at The Hague looking to imbue those experiences with theoretical rigour. Travelling across the development spectrum has given me a more nuanced view of poverty. Here, I’ve been encountering academics who translate this multi-layered reality into a general, if diverse, theory. (Student Essay C, November 2015)

Another encounter reflected on the student’s experience as a teacher in Palestine where

making development is understood as the mainstream NGOs business in Palestine. Unmaking development is, more or less, donors/NGOs free. Unmaking development happens when people decide to act. When they realize that development is more than money poured in different sectors, unmaking development in this way, is key to real development. (Student Essay A, November 2015)

Another student considered how to consider the daily expression from Morocco ‘Fouk Figuigu’ which means I am doing fine but also literally means ‘beyond Figuigu’, the place where she actually grew up. She questions the

implicit categorisation of this place as being just far and poor which can be true in certain way, however in this same place others things are happening, as people are not passive in facing inequalities between the ‘useful’ and the ‘useless’ Morocco. I think that my effort in discussing with people about Figuig was a way of telling another story of this place and its people to avoid the danger of a single story as said by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009). (Student Essay D, November 2015)

Several students, however, found it impossible to write in the first person. They were unsettled by the idea of writing narratives, firm in their belief that development was economics and progress, prescribed by academics and practiced by development experts. Their interest was in the conceptual tools about

how to measure and analyse development; they did not see the relevance of sociocultural understandings of self and community. For them writing about how they experienced development, rather than being told what it was from lecturers and textbooks, was not a valuable learning experience. Some did not understand what a development encounter could be and thinking about how they have experienced development rather than being taught it made some anxious, and others simply angry.

In response to the question about how they saw the first assignment, there were some interesting answers ranging from somewhat tongue in cheek to deeply anxious:

I learnt ‘development issues, evaluation of my own life and experiences, putting thoughts together, concepts of “mental furniture”, “unmaking”, etc., referencing, discipline, hard work, reading etc., etc., etc.’ (Student 2015 Q2.4 S 102)

To

For me, it was confusing. I am not sure if I actually learnt something out of it. (Student 2015 Q2.4 S 87)

Though there were some who enjoyed it:

It was very enriching to write the first narrative essay, since it made me reflect on my work and study experiences and understand the connection with historical processes that I can know recognize and explain with consciousness and critical view. It also helped me to identify the authors that I align my thoughts with and to go deeper in the course readings. (Student 2015 Q 2.4 S 67)

Students continue the dialogue in the four afternoons where students set the topics and take the lead in designing how to debate and on which issue, many of which in the first year of the course were resisted. They are co-producing inclusive spaces to talk about race and ethnicity, for example, with a view to improving their own experience at ISS and to help improve the course for the next batch of students.

Peer-to-peer pedagogy

The core of the success of the course is the working groups. Here there is highly creative work produced and shared, ranging from writing poetry, writing songs, role plays and online discussion with photographs and blogs. In the first year, each facilitator designed a specific workshop bringing into the course their own skills (many had been teachers or NGO facilitators). This led to an

unevenness among workshops, so in the second year the facilitators do same exercise in each of workshops. The second-year facilitators opted to review the texts or lectures and gather questions and concerns to bring back to the second lecture in the week. In the third year, the facilitators decided to design jointly weekly exercises which every group follows, and questions are brought to a plenary consolidation session with the teachers at the end of each module. As this evolving process of the working group method shows, the emphasis has been on learning from others, though it continues to be hard to break down the idea that the one giving the lecture is ‘really’ the one who ‘knows’.

Writing and performing the ISS Development Dictionary

The group assignment was wonderful and awesome, based on the multi-cultural fora and backgrounds here at ISS. (Student 2015 Q 2.6 S 42)

This was fascinating assignment, I learnt how to work with excellent people from different backgrounds and cultures, it taught us how diversity matters in making development. (Student 2015 Q 2.6 S 82)

It was during the presentations that I understood what development study was all about. (Student 2015 Q2.6 S33)

PD as a tool of analysis comes into its own when students moved into making their group ‘ISS Development Dictionary’. The students are divided into small groups of ranging over the years between seven and twelve people and take about a month to produce their dictionaries. Modelled on the original dictionary, they select five concepts from the course and produce a film based on these five concepts as a ‘pitch’ to a particular audience.

The group assignment is the most appreciated aspect of the course; students are excited that they could ‘create our own concept, taking into account what is the direction that we wanted to go’ (Student 2015 Q2.6 S 45).

The students worked hard, as one stated:

It challenged me to integrate other points of view, different to mine, with respect and inclusiveness. I learnt to work with a very diverse group in terms not only of culture but also professional perspectives and expectations regarding our studies at ISS. (Student 2015 Q2.6 S 32)

When each of the groups’ seven-minute videos are shown in a plenary sessions, attended by all, there is an electric atmosphere. Each year the videos are different; there were some extremely funny skits as well as emotionally moving films and statements. The creativity and imagination is impressive along with the scripts, the acting, use of the music and quality of the filming. Several recreate pivotal moments of development intervention, some do animations

with drawings done by hand, others do a humorous day in the life of an ISS student, others do transnational (translocal) intersectional reporting on how PD concepts travel.¹⁰

REFLECTIONS: TEACHING REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS IN REACTIONARY INSTITUTIONS?

‘Unmaking’ development can only serve any purpose if we subsequently remake it somehow. (Student Essay, November 2015)

Working with diversity

It is stimulating to design a course that enables people coming from such diverse geographies, histories, religions, cultures and educational processes to debate different experiences of development. Their understanding of development is constituted by very different people and places. There are hierarchies, simmering dislikes and there is shyness due to language barriers. There is always a hovering question about the facts and there are requests to tell the ‘real’ development story. One particularly thoughtful feedback from a student from the first year was:

I really enjoyed the methodology implemented and the experimental approach within a very diverse group of students. I believe that even those who did not enjoy or understood completely the course, will in the long term, consciously or unconsciously, enrich their understanding and approach to development in an innovative and wider view. (Student 2015 Q7.1 S82)

The quote indicates the need to be patient and allow the silences. Some of the students do not want to enter into debates in the course. Asking people to let go of the dominant story can create uncomfortable moments, and at times volatile discussions.

There is also friction around the differences of authority among the students and the teachers based on gender, class and race. There continue to be students who refute the ‘unsettling’ and ‘unmaking’ of development. A critique of subjectivities in development processes – who are the recognized development actors, institutions and power players – also extends to a critique of myself as course leader. As one student commented, ‘Why did

10 Some example of the videos from the course in 2018–2019: ‘We Are All Human’: <https://youtube/kIKMZNp9O> to ‘Portraits of Development’: <https://youtu.be/FEoZ2sWDtM4> ‘The Cakeing of Development’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=35ssiBIMRfU> ‘A Daily Voyage into the Making of Development’: <https://youtu.be/FX2KnE1NFTw>

you want us to see development in the same way that you were looking at it? . . . There is a big power relation inside teaching: Who gets to teach and why? What are the interests behind teaching certain knowledges?¹¹ As the course has evolved we have learnt to engage more easily even in plenary with students about the uncomfortable and silenced issues of difference and diversity and to be open to their stories and experiences consciously aiming not to take up a paternalist position. Particularly around issues of sexuality and race, we have found ways to deal with discussion by looking outside the development studies literature to popular culture, even forensic studies and above all listening to the messages of young activist groups around the world.

The knowledge I got is like a gloomy cloud. I cannot get the clear answer about ‘development’ solutions but at least I think we got the tools to find the answer later. (Student 2015 Q7.3 S 44)

Is it appropriate to turn students’ ‘world upside down’ or unmake development without giving them a clear set of tools to remake it? This was not fully solved in the course. We pointed them to other courses in the MA that will enable students to help them engage differently with mainstream development practices. In the later version of the course, we have tried to respond to how to build alternatives to development and at least students recognize the power of many stories:

That there is no single story about something. People live in different spaces, cultures and times, so that we have to be more critical when doing development agendas. (Student 2015 Q 2.4 S 45)

Challenges of power and knowledge

We have all encountered development at one point or another. The task for us as development workers is to critically assess and unpack development. (Student Essay C, November 2015)

One of the main lessons from teaching the course is that it is a challenge to create spaces of transgression. It can be confronting to people who arrive at The Hague to meet immediately with critiques of development. The responses of the students have made me question my own position as a Dutch-based academic. In the same way, the course is asking the students to position themselves as development workers; I have to consider where ISS is positioned in the modernization processes of change. The course is designed to challenge authoritarian and hegemonic ideas, and to make visible the impact of modernity and coloniality in development processes, but, awkwardly, both teachers

11 Personal correspondence with student of 2015–2016 course, 11 November 2016.

and students are bound by the same hegemonic structures of development and education processes. We are part of the privileged mainstream of development discourses we are wanting to challenge. Even if there is a tension around the different forms of privilege in our course interactions trying to produce revolutionary ideas in a reactionary institution. In addition to the obvious hierarchy of teacher and student, we teach in English, in an institution with its specific colonial history. The scholarships are given by the Dutch government with the expectation that students come to our institution to be trained in how ‘to do development’.¹² There is the underlying assumption in using PD as a pedagogical tool that students can question development. Yet we were also grading them, inviting them to reproduce what we said in exams and essays. It is highly contradictory to say that knowledge is partial and yet grade it. We deal with it by being as honest as we can about this contradiction and by giving maximum points for group work and creativity. For the first time, this year (2018–2019) the course features four ungraded sessions worth three credits (the graded course is worth eight credits) where the students need to complete assignments (quiz, group project producing posters and participate in an open debate with invited speakers).

The teaching team is conscious of the politics of teaching and of the disconnections between the spaces of teaching/learning and the realities of the world beyond. Though we speak about alternatives at the community level, social movements and radical networks, we do not address directly what to do with the ‘big development’ picture, even if we are evidently critical of it because we speak about partial truths, shades of development and so forth. We follow Freire in this regard seeing education as ‘the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world’ (Freire 2000, 34). Our aim is not to force them into solidarity with social movements, feminism or radical alternatives but to reflect on their privileges. In this we use, along with PD, decoloniality and feminist pedagogies in order to consider how best to engage with Western-dominated models of development. We try to create a safe space where epistemic violence could be countered through ethical engagements with other students, a connection that we hope extends beyond the classroom.

At first, teaching PD in ISS provoked a tense reaction among ISS teaching staff, though after several versions of the course this concern has abated. The original concern reflected several factors. We are living a time where there is uncertainty about development studies in general and a push towards

12 Currently, one-third of the fellowships at ISS come from the Dutch government. ISS is now getting more and more students with fellowships (or study loans) from governments located in the south. Every year ISS has seven fellowships from the World Bank.

more conservative competitive academic practices. Within and outside ISS the increasing anti-migrant, anti-refugee public behaviour and a rise in right-wing politics accompanied by explicit racism inform our daily interactions. It is hard to undo years of colonial education that positions teachers as hierarchical providers of knowledge.

Education as the practice of freedom

As the course matures, students are engaging with PD because it gave them the chance to construct something different from the mainstream. Such students take up the question of how to create alternatives to the injustices inherent in modern Western development by looking for the possibilities to shift dominant Western power and knowledge structures.

When writing this chapter, I went back to graduates from ISS in order to ask them if, reflecting on what they learnt about development from the PD approach, they found it possible to link the classroom to spaces of activism beyond the academy, when I asked them to reflect on what they learnt about development from the PD approach. The question included if they thought the course helped them ‘to do development’ differently. Do revolutionary ideas born in a reactionary institution come to fruition when students take them outside the classroom to make the needed and crucial social economic and political transformations in today’s shockingly ‘post-truth’ era?

From the responses, it seems that students both welcomed and felt unsettled by the course’s pedagogical approach to development. J¹³ sees the General Course as enabling her ‘to ask those very necessary but uncomfortable questions . . . which is not limited to the study of theory, but engages with analysing policy and practice at the global and local level’. While T comments that the course ‘taught me ways to critique mainstream development practices’ through a liberating if ‘unsettling process of reading, discussions with peers and struggling to write something of relevance’, B saw the course’s pedagogical practices as promoting a ‘horizontal class environment’ which allowed for ‘meaningful and extensive student participation where students could lead the learning process’. L writes that the course has ‘taught us by raising questions. It has never been about being right or wrong . . . it has changed the way I see, feel, and experience the development itself’. P confirms that she was ‘unexpectedly pushed to unlearn many ideas and assumptions’. Z reflects that it ‘was not easy at the beginning’ but it opened ‘a door for a deep understanding of what development is and has been in the history of the world’.

N enjoyed the ‘enriching and constructive places of reflection’. She felt challenged to unpack her own thinking: ‘Learning to listen in order to respect

¹³ Students asked to be anonymous, so I have randomly assigned them initials.

diversity' helped her to see 'the path to transform everyday practices' as part of the 'the political process of the unmaking of development'. C saw the course as providing ways to think 'otherwise' and to embrace the 'imaginary of what is possible' which dominant ideas tell us 'isn't possible/realistic/practical/worthwhile'.

E found that the course allowed her to become more consciously aware of her 'deeply normative and Western-centric' position. She felt that the course dramatically shifted her way of thinking, helped by the 'informal and personable teaching practices' she was encouraged to think in new ways and 'ask ourselves why we thought how we did'.

The more informal student-teacher relationship was appreciated by many but also questioned. While S sees the PD pedagogical practices as part of an attempt by teachers to unmake 'the power-based distance teacher-student and the making of a trust-based and enriching relationship', M, on the other hand, felt that the diversity of thought among teachers and students needed to be pushed more. She missed deeper probings into questions of 'positionality, privilege and complicity'.

Some also shared how they currently try to put into practice what they learnt. L on her return to development projects says she now focuses on 'who are excluded in the policies'; she asks them 'personally how they want to be treated'. And when writing up her reports ensures that local peoples' experiences and strategies are included.

V, working at the Central Bank, states that she now sees 'clearly all the power relationships and inequalities that surround me'. At the same time, she is able 'to be tolerant with other people's ideas' and that 'little by little' she is opening the minds of the 'conservative elite' with whom she is working.

After graduating S has engaged in practices of 'unsettling mainstream development' in a popular education project. She carries the legacy of the course as she regularly questions her own role as an NGO, asking 'who are we in this social practice? Why and how to acknowledge our position and role?'

C, in reflecting on her current job in a public service employees' union, 'a militant organization that has had amazing successes and its own rigidities', sees herself as continuing to unmake development in 'close to home contexts'. Z, working back in the development sector, states that her education helped her 'to question the rationale behind my practice' and to 'be a more reflexive and responsible professional'.

Some students, on the other hand, are more critical. T feels that the 'value of the insights I learnt . . . were not easy to convey to family back home, nor to prospective employers at NGOs or development agencies'. In her job in a funding agency she felt that her 'critical thinking was not appreciated'. She writes that it is hard to 'come to terms with the contradiction of challenging

hegemonic development processes, yet needing to conform to the institutions and discourses of development and education . . . Being critical without proposing alternatives is not productive'.

Similarly, A warns that critical pedagogy is a very 'risky business'. In her current job as a gender expert, she is 'constantly doubting if when performing a consultancy, or a research project on gender-related topics I can stay what they call "professional"'. She is rueful when she states: 'many of us can suffer from anxiety as we become politicised subjects'.

M feels that she definitely gained 'a critical edge' that she has taken into her work life. But, now she is 'cynical about the mainstream field of international development [and] this is often a difficult position to be in'. She wonders whether what she learnt is too radical.

PIONEERING PD AS A TOOL FOR TRANSFORMATION

At the heart of the ISS, General Course is an understanding that development, by its very nature, is an aspirational and forward-looking project. Development interventions change power relations not only in the economy but also in the home and workplace, challenging class, gender and generational order, reconfiguring intimate relations. The course recognizes that such issues are lived but not so easily spoken about in development studies. Therefore, one of the challenges has been to create the possibilities for students to speak about development studies from a critical PD perspective while still being committed to practical strategies. The course builds on a dialogue among the students' own experiences and knowledges of development and perspectives from the course literature. The aim is for students to understand how development processes can be questioned strategically, and in this questioning to generate development alternatives. Teaching development studies from a bottom-up perspective entails countering the expectations of students of universally valid expert knowledge on development. The threefold emphasis on development as an aspiration, a discourse of power and set of practices presents PD as a tool for transformation.

The challenge of the General Course is to break down the notion of expertise, disciplinary divides and that all allusive assumption of objectivity. It goes beyond development studies and historical and contemporary discourses on the deserving and non-deserving poor, the economic, social, cultural and political outcomes of various anti-poverty development interventions such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. It looks at people and places – the experiences of people of different ages, class, race and ethnicity, confronting and challenging pre-existing and intersectional inequalities. By asking students to reflect on their own experiences, the course aims to combine

hands-on experience with on-the-ground realities of power differentials and exclusion. Key words are redistribution, recognition and representation. It introduces students to academic research by confronting them not only with policy documents but also with scholar activism. The course is designed to move the discussion beyond the reading and studying of texts and into the realm of critical deconstruction and imagination using different forms of social media that the students took up, intuitively, in relation to the questions and discussions being posed. The experience raises for me important questions about the role of critical pedagogy in a neoliberal climate and what kind of space PD can have in an increasingly cautious academic environment. Right now we are completing the third version of the course which is working through different narratives of unlearning or ‘unmaking’ of development by looking at three angles of the debate – economic narratives; people and places; and PD and alternatives to development – inspired by each other’s ability not to give into despair in these dark times.

What I have learnt, and continue to learn from this experiment in teaching PD, is the importance of listening, humbleness and flexibility. Humour is particularly important, as is the need to be honest about what goes wrong and what can be done about it. The most rewarding part has been creating spaces for engagement that took us beyond the confines of the classroom, working with online technologies across space and time – bringing in the places and voices of the students. Above all, we try to give students hope, through the capacity to peel away the gendered, racialized and exploitative global capitalist system that is driving ecological and climatic destruction. The course is in line with the aim to decolonize development studies and moves beyond the one narrative towards a plurality of knowledges by looking at various discourses and representations of development, beginning with the students’ knowledge, concerns, critiques also of the education institution itself. The course works with an entanglement of knowledges and interconnections – in our teaching, in our assessment of the modern development project and the wider society beyond – which the students bring into the classroom in their writings, debates, videos and essays. By stressing the plurality of knowledges, we encourage students to find possibilities and to resist the unilateral story of an all-encompassing oppressive capitalocentric narrative in what we hope is a shared life affirming curriculum.

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Chapter 13

Tools Against the Masters: Decolonial Unsettling of the Social Science Classroom

Chandra-Milena Danielzik, Franziska
Müller and Daniel Bendix

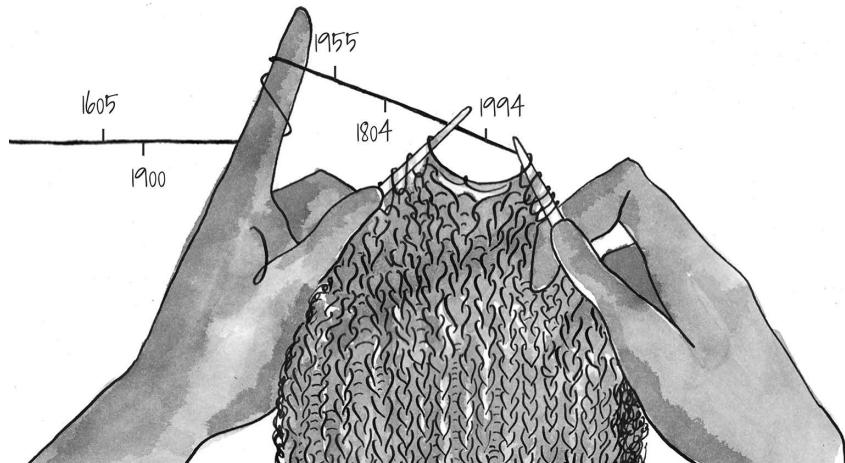


Figure 13.1. Knitting histories
Source: Knitting histories, by Lena Ziyal, infotext-berlin.de

A postcolonial critique of the social sciences is a bit like knitting a sweater: One takes up a long, straight singular thread of wool, gets some knitting needles and starts to create multiple loops that intertwine and fabricate a new, complex pattern. In other words, postcolonial critique takes traditional, seemingly neat narratives – of, for instance, progress, modernity, development or the West – to knit new, multiple stories. It is about bringing unexpected patterns to the fore that may be uncomfortable and itchy at first because they challenge settled norms. The picture of knitting is not only about turning a single, simple, linear story and turning it into something that interlopes past

and present as well as local and global. It also points to the fact that dominant narratives and knowledge about our history and contemporary world are mainly dependent on who can take hold of the knitting needle. A decolonial approach means to zoom in on the struggle over the needle. Since our contemporary world is a product of continuing power struggles, it is contingent and open to change. The social science classroom is a political space, a site of struggle. Teaching can by no means be considered an innocent act but is always deeply embedded within a broader context of intersectional power relations that may reaffirm discriminatory practices but may also contribute to overcoming them (Andreotti 2011).

In the following, we first outline some of the problems we see with the status quo in teaching political science – the social science discipline we are most familiar with – in terms of postcolonial sensitivity and review existing attempts at decentring the discipline. Subsequently, we put forward what we see as the task of decolonial social science teaching. Last but not least – and once the problem has become clear – we deal with the question of ‘what is to be done’ and introduce a selection of methods that we have either developed ourselves or experimented with in our teaching. The presented tools are intended to challenge and deconstruct power relations and bring postcolonial knowledge and decolonial practice to the classroom. Coming from diverse backgrounds,¹ our experiences as social science teachers inform our view that teacher’s positionalities matter for pluralizing the academic classroom. For instance, a teacher of colour may empower students of colour and counter the feeling of alienation within a White academic structure, culture and form of knowledge production. At the same time, social positionality is not automatically bound to political and epistemological positionality and we should remain aware of not mixing up these different dimensions. While our positionnalities in terms of migration, race, class, gender and sexuality partially

1 Chandra’s parents migrated to Germany, one from Eastern Europe and the other from the global South. She is the first in her wider family with a high school diploma and the first to study at university. Her teaching is informed by her working-class background, her experiences with racism in Germany and during her studies in South Africa as well as her decades-long activism on precarity, queerfeminism and migration. She has been an active member of the postcolonial education collective glokal for many years and currently works on the issue of racism in the German judiciary. Franziska comes from a teacher’s family and was socialized in a semi-bourgeois context of first-generation academics. She has a long-standing social movement background in climate/energy justice activism. While her lectures mostly focus on international relations theory and global environmental governance, her (not so) hidden agenda aims at making space for dissident voices in curricula. She makes use of political simulations, role plays and mapping exercises that allow a deeper engagement with different positionnalities. Daniel is from a White academic family. He has for a long time been active with glokal and in anti-racist and internationalist social movements. Currently, he teaches in a German master program with students from the global South, in which issues of empowerment have become more and more important to him. There, he has to reflect on not only being the teacher but also the only White person in the classroom. For his activism and interest in issues of racism, colonialism and global inequality, his involvement with his family background is crucial: Some of his family members were murdered in the Shoah and others supported both National Socialism and apartheid.

differ, we share a particular unrest with the practices of academic teaching, as well as the shape and structure of the academic classroom.

THE PROBLEM: UNIVERSALIZING WESTERN THOUGHT AND HOMOGENIZING THE CLASSROOM

Decolonial teaching is not only about adding the topics of colonialism or postcolonial studies to the curriculum. It needs to question the disciplines' coming-into-being and its core concepts. What is more, power relations that structure the classroom are often disregarded. They need to be acknowledged and addressed. This implies (self-critically) applying a post-/decolonial critique to classroom interactions, rather than merely teaching *about* postcolonial perspectives.

As mentioned above, we mainly restrict our focus to political science. Political science considers a variety of sources as its ideational roots, be it classical state theories such as the works of Platon or Aristotle, or theories about polity and citizenship from the age of enlightenment and the wider debates on political liberalism and democracy. Likewise, central categories and concepts such as 'the actor', 'the citizen', 'the state' as well as governance and power relations are traced back to classical, enlightenment, liberal or conservative strands of political thought. Yet, in doing so, political science's ideational history is still pervaded by Eurocentric assumptions. As John Hobson and Robert Vitalis have pointed out for the sub-discipline of international relations, it is embedded in a deep-rooted scientific racism, for instance in terms of North-South dichotomies, justification of colonial expansion, and not least a sense of normative and ideational superiority on the epistemological level (Hobson 2012; Vitalis 2015). A quote by neorealist scholar Kenneth Waltz vividly illustrates such perceptions: 'It would be . . . ridiculous to construct a theory of international politics based on Malaysia and Costa Rica' (Waltz 1979, 72).

For the case of Germany, political science's colonial roots are a bit harder to track. Still, political science's predecessors such as national economy, cameralistic (governmental accounting) or law took a central role in colonization. At the 'Hamburger Kolonialinstitut', Hamburg's first public higher education institution, academic curricula for the colonial officers encompassed public administration and accounting of Germany's colonial economies (Becker 2005, 54). These earlier roots are neglected and indeed the discipline's ideational history in Germany rather emphasizes the tradition of 'democratic re-education' under the auspice of the U.S. military government after World War II. In the dominant narrative, political science is thus understood as a school for democracy – and democracy is conflated with Western ideas of

democracy. The discipline's identity has thus foreclosed any consideration of political philosophy beyond the Western hemisphere. It disregards, for example, the development of democratic norms in non-Western settings (see Ling 2014 on Confucianist thought), declarations of universal human rights *avant la lettre* (see Grovogui 2006 on the Haitian revolution and Quilombos) or the ubiquity of state formations (see Eze 2008). Such obliteration of different realities has effects on global relations and the lives of people, considering for example that military attacks by Western powers in the global South are legitimized with reference to non-existence of democratic and state structures. Or that reparations for genocide or colonialism cannot be granted because the recipient countries allegedly lack democratic societal structures to guarantee distribution.

Political science tends to take existing broader social, political and economic orders as given, such as liberal democracy, capitalism and the nation state. By doing so, a violent history is carried into the present. The historical roots and normative foundations of South-North relations – as evident in, for instance, global production chains and global institutional configurations – are ‘echoes of empire’ (Hansen and Jonsson 2014; Nicolaïdis 2014). Furthermore, this refers to the structure of global economic governance (Jones 2012; Ling 2014) or to the role of the EU as a normative power (Müller 2015; Weinhardt and Jones 2015). The discipline thus implicitly positions itself ideologically. It disguises its particular ideological stance by taking dominant Western norms and colonial power structures for granted and perpetuates them. As María do Mar Castro Varela and Alisha M. B. Heinemann (2016, 21) put it, ‘it is . . . politically wise and pedagogically essential to question the historical amnesia, so that the assumption of the colonial civilizing mission – that an intervention into postcolonial countries is an ethical act – is not reinforced again and again’. This is particularly relevant for development studies and international relations. These fields engage with the ways in which South-North relations are crafted, be it through material and resource flows, finance flows, migration of people or, on the cognitive level, the diffusion of knowledge, norms and discourses. A decolonial demand does not only call for greater plurality and inclusion, but – with regard to decentring as a critical epistemological strategy – what is needed are radical ruptures. Here, Castro Varela and Heinemann, for instance, call for the ‘pedagogical aim of not degrading the global South to an object that is in need of Europe’s aid, but to attack . . . the script of an imperialist education and to give space to “epistemologies of the South”’ (2016, 21).

Domination and subjugation do only play out on the level of content and concepts but also on the level of the subjects involved in teaching and learning. While most students in Germany, by living in a Western consumer society, generally profit from the ongoing global colonial relations of capitalist

exploitation (Lessenich 2016), they inhabit different positionalities within Germany's postcolonial and postnational socialist society (Danielzik and Bendix 2013). As bell hooks (1994) as well as scholars working on the German context (Malter and Hotait 2012; Mecheril et al. 2010) have pointed out, the classroom is a place where inequalities of race, gender, class and others are replicated. Especially when teaching touches on global relations or local societal structures, where the racialized Other is explicitly or implicitly referenced, 'non-white' students run the danger of being associated with problems on the one hand (Marmer et al. 2010) and of being used as objects of exoticization on the other (Danielzik and Bendix 2010). A study conducted by Elina Marmer et al. (2010) shows that when the global South is portrayed as deficient in German school materials and teaching, this gets directly associated with students who are perceived as originating from the South and who consequently have to endure emotional as well as physical violence. They are connected to poverty, hunger, fundamentalism, corruption and war by their fellow students, who themselves are convinced they are part of an intellectually and materially superior 'culture'. Part of the 'non-white' students learning experience then entails being positioned as Other and inferior, excluded from a 'whitewashed' society. A Western colonial framework of ideas within the classroom is transmitted into the very social and political fabric of power structures within a migration society – and at the end of the day, into nothing less than the identities of students and teachers.

THE TASKS OF POSTCOLONIAL KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN TEACHING

Decolonization of teaching and academic knowledge production relies on several strategies, which aim at decentring and destabilizing the hegemonic modes of knowledge production.

Hierarchies and the modes of hierarchization with a colonial legacy play an important role in this regard. Classroom hierarchies are manifold and refer not only to teacher-student relations but also to hierarchies between different forms of knowledge and articulation, and different positionalities found among students and staff. Creating a sense of awareness for the interplay between different modes of hierarchization is a crucial step that needs to be achieved before embarking on strategies for deconstructing them. Our experience in political education on racism indicates that mainly questions of identity, subjectivation processes and self-hood are brought to the fore by educators. These questions need to be raised – yet to address them in an individualist manner risks falling prey to the liberal language of diversity and personal empowerment, which then silences any structural barriers and their

intertwining with capitalist modes of recruitment, higher education reform and academic competition (see Gutiérrez Rodríguez et al. in this volume). For instance, the neoliberal university exploits non-Western identities as ‘colourful’ additions to a faculty or to a curriculum in the name of diversity (Loyola-Hernández 2019). In this regard, we see the need to consider the ways in which capitalism fundamentally relies on categories of difference and strategically mobilizes them. For academic teaching and for classroom contexts in the wider sense, this implies creating an awareness for hierarchies and for the neoliberal structures that reproduce or enhance them.

Sensitivity for postcolonial hierarchies also implies *recognition of non-academic knowledge*. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's conviction that emancipation of the colonized has to include the decolonization of their minds can also be transferred to the Others within the West. For instance, the migration society does not yet value the languages of many migrant groups that are not just means of communication but also avenues for conceptualizing the world and for understanding diverging cosmologies. Decolonization is about everyday resistance and empowerment in our homes and communities and thus needs plural and diverse forms of articulation. Didactical tools should thus not just address and identify the ways in which hierarchies are productive but should also suggest ways of overcoming them.

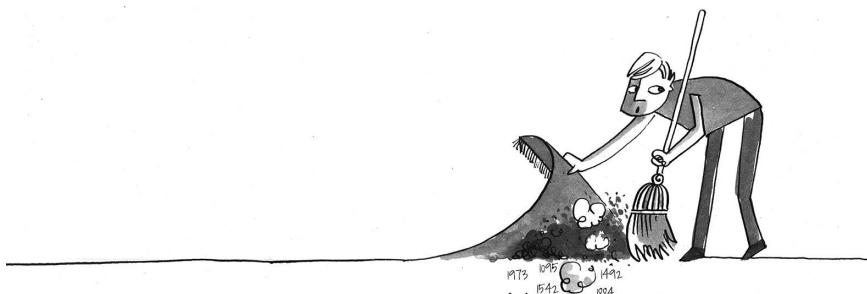


Figure 13.2. Sweeping histories under the carpet

Source: Sweeping histories under the carpet, by Lena Ziyal, infotext-berlin.de

A third aspect refers to *absences, silencing and denaming*, and the ways in which these practices pervade teaching and knowledge production in academia. In this regard, the construction of academic curricula has advanced as a powerful tool that secures and secludes a very particular academic canon, and even more the struggles for pluralizing and de-Westernizing curricula have faced much gatekeeping and foreclosing tactics. Following Santos, who points out that ‘the sociology of absences consists of an inquiry that aims to explain that what does not exist is, in fact, actively produced as non-existent, that is, as a non-credible alternative to what exists’ (2004, 238), we

see such strategies at work for instance when learning about certain political authors or dates, which are presented as being neutral historical figures, or ‘classics’, that is, being part of a universal and ahistorical canon. To present a date such as 1492 (or in its extreme, celebrate ‘Columbus Day’ on Turtle Island) as a neutral historical fact – or to celebrate Thanksgiving on campus ‘to commemorate the American foundation’ as one of the authors had to witness recently – glorifies a whole history of settler colonialism and denames genocide. This is especially troubling as the German perspective on settler colonialism suffers from several absences: The figure of the German emigrant to the United States is painted in an empathetic way, by emphasizing motivations such as the hope for a good life in the ‘land of the free’, the desire to escape poverty or the flight from religious or political discrimination, yet stays silent about the complacency of German Americans in settler colonialism. By simply labelling German settlers as hard-working ‘emigrants’, they appear as neutral and almost innocent people. The activities of German settlers, such as buying and selling land or introducing legal system for doing so, altogether form part of the ‘settler privilege’ (Gilio-Whitaker 2018a), yet the German discourse on migration does not necessarily recognize them as colonizing practices and the particular contributions of German Americans to U.S. colonialism are not taken into account.² At the same time, German fascination with Native American Culture – ‘German Indianthusianism’ (Lutz 2002) – dates back almost 150 years and has resulted in a historical amnesia, which is impaired by powerful stereotypes of the ‘*noble savage*’ (Penny 2013). Still, perspectives of American Indians or Indigenas on settler colonialism are rare³ in Germany, also due to a lack of American Indian presence in Germany that would allow fighting such historical amnesia. In order to break away from these forms of silencing, it is crucial to amplify non-Western voices, for instance through curricula, as well as through classroom experiences that go beyond a mere textual representation. Still, doing so in the first place requires an awareness of the silencing and denaming, as a history of normalization has centred hegemonic interpretations, which makes it difficult to identify other understandings. Furthermore, ‘settler fragility’ (Gilio-Whitaker 2018b) or ‘white fragility’, which refer to the inability or uneasiness to talk about unearned privileges, may obstruct a deep-felt reflection.

Last, highlighting *transhistorical and transnational connections* can serve as a strategy to overcome a linear understanding of history that is rooted in clearly drawn boundaries and separable ‘cultures’. Of our tools, the ‘connecting the dots’ project is the most outspoken didactical concept in that regard

2 For an official representation, see <https://www.deutschland.de/en/usa/us-immigration-americas-german-roots>.

3 The Native American Association of Germany is one of the few groups that raise awareness for Native American issues (<http://www.naaog.de/>).

(see below). A focus on transition and co-creation of norms, practices, customs or discourses is an almost classical research interest in the realm of post-colonial critique, with research on the Haitian Revolution (Grovogui 2006) as a prominent example. Siba Grovogui has pointed out, how the Haitian revolutionaries not only adopted the norms of the French Revolution but also expanded and truly universalized them, by granting citizen status to women as well as to the poor proletarian class. However, a decolonial perspective goes even further in its critique than merely adding some little known historical facts – for instance, the history of the Songhay Empire in Mali or the Maji Maji War of Resistance against the German colonial administration in today's Tanzania. Rather, it underlines the need to take the Haitian revolution seriously: as a decentring of European political thought about democracy, liberty and human rights, that deconstructs the ways in which we have so far been taught about world order and its underlying norm sets. In this sense, the reference to transhistorical and transnational connections invites us to question epistemologies and long-held belief systems, in, for instance, the separation of humans from nature or the separation between 'the West and the Rest'. Even though these boundaries have blurred over time, they have not disappeared, but rather changed its shape, as for instance the replacement of 'scientific racism' by 'cultural racism' demonstrates. In this regard, a decolonial critique decentres authorities of Western knowledge production and reveals the extent to which enlightenment thought is also associated with scientific racism, the invention of 'whiteness' and the concept of 'race' (Eze 1997). In addition, a transhistorical and transnational perspective emphasizes the ubiquity of emancipatory concepts, but still questions an all-too-easy universalization. Taking this back to the classroom would mean to apply didactical tools that express this sense of transnationality. In this regard, especially the Ejolt maps and post/decolonial city walks allow for a deeper understanding by creating connections between different socioecological struggles, and by developing a different understanding of locality that feeds into the lines of global history.

THE TOOLS

The didactical 'tools', which we will introduce in the subsequent section, can be considered as strategies that can foster a greater sense of awareness in academic teaching and knowledge production, and act as an amplifier for more diverse voices in the classroom. Furthermore, they may serve as an encouragement for academic activism that bridges the gap between the ivory tower and social/political struggles.

Connecting the dots: Histories of oppression and resistance

In our educational work at glokal (of which Chandra and Daniel are part), we have been working with a timeline method to teach about postcolonial continuities and ruptures in different classrooms – and in particular in extracurricular education – with North-South volunteers, development professionals, NGOs, state institutions, refugee support groups and groups of the radical left. The method relies on a large number of quotes from the past 500 years. Recently, we developed an e-learning tool based on the quotes and the experience in teaching we had gathered over the years (www.connecting-the-dots.org). For this, several experts were asked to research further quotes and provide context information and so forth. It consists of ten topic-specific timelines on, for instance, labour, migration, gender and sexuality, human-nature relations or capitalism. In addition, there is a timeline with random quotes. As a user you are able to choose one timeline and then start playing. It provides various quotes that you can drag onto the timeline. If you have placed the quote incorrectly, you are asked to do it again. If you are correct or fail after the second try, you can have a look at the correct answer. The user is also provided with the year, the author, the bibliography of the author, context and further reading. This e-learning tool can be used not only individually but also in a classroom in which the whole class or smaller groups decide on the quote to place on the timeline. Thereafter, the students can speak about the additional information provided and also do their own research on the events and actors invoked.

For instance, the timeline on ‘development’ includes the following quote by Frantz Fanon (1963, 95): ‘This European opulence is literally scandalous, for it has been built on the back of the slaves, it has fed on the blood of slaves, it comes directly from the soil and the subsoil of the underdeveloped world. The material wellbeing and progress of Europe have been built with the sweat and the corpses of the Negroes, the Arabs, the Indians and the Yellow races’. This statement allows for discussing the historicity of global material inequality and the interrelatedness of wealth and poverty. Students are thus invited to question the hegemonic idea that the West ‘developed’ by itself due to intrinsic qualities such as inventiveness and hard work. Adding to this counter-hegemonic perspective on the West’s wealth, the timeline provides a quote by an enslaved person from Barbados who in the second half of the eighteenth century questioned the exploitative nature of European instrumental rationality that was so key to legitimizing colonialism as such: ‘The Devel was in the English-man, that he makes every thing work; he makes the Negro work, the Horse work, the Ass work, the Wood work, the Water work, and the Winde work’ (Great Newes from Barbados, or, a True and Faithful Account of the Grand Conspiracy of the Negroes against the English, cited

in Linebaugh and Rediker 2013, 125). This quote can be used to disprove the idea that ecological awareness and a critique of exploitative human-nature relations stems from recent thought and activist processes in the West, such as Fridays for Future or Extinction Rebellion. It points to the long history of struggle against the imposition of capitalist logics.

The timelines assemble dominant as well as dissident or counter-hegemonic voices and invite the classroom to reflect on the question of positionality. They transcend a universal history that fixes the global North and South in a relation of binary opposition in the present: developed versus underdeveloped, actively changing the world versus in need of aid and guidance, civilized versus barbaric, knowledge and science versus emptiness, nature and tradition. The tool shows that the global South has always had its own sociopolitical realities, practical strategies of resistance and theoretical and philosophical critiques of the colonizing societies.

EJOLT maps: Interconnected revolts

EJOLT – Environmental Justice Organisations, Liabilities, and Trade – was a research project that focused on the activities of environmental justice organizations and featured activist-led research. One of the key outcomes of the project is an Atlas of Environmental Justice (<https://ejatlas.org/>), which maps environmental conflicts worldwide. Data for the Atlas were retrieved in close collaboration with environmental justice organizations, and researchers not affiliated with the project were able to join and contribute. The Atlas provides an intuitive online platform which allows exploring ecological conflicts and civil society activities. Zooming in on certain commodities, companies or forms of conflict, the users are able to visualize and localize environmental struggles. Also, the Atlas facilitates the interconnection of similar struggles going on in distant places. By drawing on activist knowledge, the Atlas amplifies civil society voices, which would otherwise be confined to their local sites of struggle (Martinez-Alier et al. 2011; Temper et al. 2015).

The Atlas serves as a valuable tool for academic teaching in the field of global environmental politics or political ecology, especially when referring to these themes from a postcolonial perspective. At a time where global climate justice movements become much more diverse, but also tend to reflect more on their internal racisms and historically rooted non-diversity, EJOLT maps are able to facilitate these reflection processes by giving more evidence on struggles happening in the global South. It allows creating interconnections between the colonization of societies and nature by exploring how nature-society relations are violated through interventions and displacements due to extractivism, dam-building or other large infrastructure projects. Furthermore, it gives evidence of transnational activist networks and the ubiquity

of ecological conflict. For students, EJOLT maps serve as a visualization tool that highlights the interconnectedness of transnational struggles and makes it easier to relate to struggles at remote places, as similar motivations, strategies or practices can be identified.

Post- and decolonial city tours: Urban manifestations of hidden histories

Since about fifteen years, post- and decolonial history projects have curated city walks in several German cities. City walks can be considered a low-threshold way of visualizing and localizing Germany's colonial history. While debates on colonial reparations, streets renaming and restitution have gained prominence in the past five to ten years, Germany unfortunately is still a latecomer in terms of colonial remembrance. Colonial history still seems to be cut off from the public consciousness, which means that historical facts are (if at all) presented in a distant way that prevents a deeper and more personal connection to colonial atrocities. This underlines the need to develop concepts for experiencing and reflecting on colonial history and its everyday repercussions. Post- and decolonial city tours therefore represent at least two traditions. First, a strong connection to 'Geschichtswerkstätten' (local history workshops, stemming from citizen science subverting 'official' historiography) that underlines the interest to access subaltern histories and develop alternative interpretations. Second, and equally strong, is a decolonial motivation, which is inspired by antiracist movements and BIPOC empowerment. This decolonial motivation highlights that the aim of such history projects does not end with revealing historical facts and figures, but should rather rewrite history and highlight how colonial mindsets are still present in today's political discourses, racist slurs or institutionalized discrimination. As a didactical tool it also deconstructs a given cityscape and reveals the colonial entanglements enmeshed in it (Bernhard 2016; Emde 2017). While Freiburg, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Berlin were some of the earliest places, post- and decolonial city tours can nowadays be found in at least twelve towns (<https://postcolonialpotsdam.wordpress.com/postcolonial-tours/>). In 2015, the group 'kassel postkolonial' has conceptualized a two-hour city tour. Kassel postkolonial offers its tours for students, NGOs, political foundations and the interested public, and understands its work as a way of intervening in seemingly apolitical spaces, in order to create a sense of historical awareness.

The tour starts at the site of a relatively recent racist hate crime – the murder of Halit Yozgat, committed by the terror group National-Socialist Underground in 2006 – and reflects on the roots of scientific racism, how they are prevalent up until today and how they can be traced back to particular sites and events in the Kassel region. The tour then proceeds to the university

campus and visits the former headquarter of the Henschel heavy industry factory, which produced tanks, lorries, locomotives and rail tracks, that were of strategic importance during the Herero/Nama genocide in Namibia between 1904 and 1908. Thereafter, it focuses on the former colonial school in nearby Witzenhausen, where colonial farmers were trained between 1898 and 1944 to establish plantations in German colonies. As the farmer apprentices carried out an anti-Semitic pogrom already in 1931, the intertwinings between colonial and national-socialist ideology become apparent. After World War II, the colonial school was closed and after a period of transformation the German Institute for Tropical and Subtropical Agriculture (DITSL) was created in 1956 as its legal successor. The tour ends at Kassel's natural history museum. Here, Samuel Thomas Soemmering worked as an anatomist between 1779 and 1784, carrying out public dissections and specializing in the human body. He devoted much of his scientific work to finding proof for a theory of scientific racism. As a 'proof' he used bodies of Black farm-workers, who had been deported to Germany as trophies from the U.S. Civil War, and had served in the landscape park Wilhelmshöhe (which is now a UNESCO world heritage site), yet found an early death due to suicide and adverse climate conditions. In essence, Soemmering claimed that different human races would exist and that a Black race would be inferior to a White race. While his writing found the appraisal of Immanuel Kant, who cherished him as one of the most significant disectors, his race theory was heavily disputed by physician and anthropologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach. Ending the city tour at this point opens up a space for reflecting on the past and present of racist and colonial ideologies. Even in a seemingly provincial setting, such as in Kassel, the city tour demonstrates the ubiquity of Germany's colonial past, and depicts how coloniality is deeply embedded in the fabric of our daily living.

Mangoes & bullets: Learning about the complexity of domination through empowerment

Mangoes & bullets (www.mangoes-and-bullets.org) is an online collection of materials for reflecting on racism and other systems of domination, also produced by glokal. It takes a particular analytical standpoint: power structures are dissected and rendered visible through the lens of resistance. Resistance is thus understood as a 'chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their points of application and the methods used' (Foucault cited in Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). The platform encompasses, among others, films, texts, songs, poems and information on political activism. The materials challenge injustice from different perspectives and in manifold ways. By entering keywords such as, for example, 'antisemitism', 'prison' or 'neoliberalism', the users are directed to material on these issues.



Figure 13.3. Mangoes and bullets

Source: mangoes & bullets, by Jana Doell

Decolonial teaching is about deconstructing global and local power structures with a colonial legacy. Even though these shape our everyday experiences and our perceptions of the self and the world, concepts of power often remain abstract in social science teaching. Here, mangoes & bullets offers a space for understanding the manifold experiences with power. Through the diversity of material as well as subject positions, the platform presents empirical evidence of the plurality of living within and resisting the colonial matrix, and of the various and subtle ways that different people are confronted with oppression in their everyday lives. Thereby, it creates an awareness of the complexity of power structures. What is more, the resource collection tries to decentre academic knowledge production, not by dismissing it but by not assuming hierarchies between different forms of knowledge, as highlighted by a review: 'Where a track by the Berlin rapper Alpa Gun is listed next to a round table with Angela Davis and the "coloniality of power" by Aníbal Quijano appears as "related post", space is created for new, emancipatory partnerships between postcolonial theory and pop culture' (Schwabe 2015).

The name of the platform – taken from the title of a collection of poems by John Agard – is then meant to reflect both intent and content:

Bullets as a symbol of oppression, but also of resistance against colonialism, racism and exploitation; mangoes as so called southern fruit, as products of exploitative labour conditions and capitalist economic structures in the context

of global trade; fruits as the sweetness of empowerment; fruits whose sweetness turns into bitter taste when we have to put on a sweet smile in the face of racism, while we would actually love to explode like a bullet; family ties to the places where mangoes grow, while we ourselves live in the land of the bullets; bullets, manufactured in Germany, which kill in faraway places, and people who come from Europe or beyond to arrive in this country, only to be welcomed by anything but sweet and tasty mangoes. (<https://www.mangoes-and-bullets.org/about-mangoes-and-bullets/>)

The diversity of the material shows that power or oppression are contextual, intersectional and contingent – as is resistance. The eclectic way of assembling different forms of resistance – there is no one-way road to tackle oppression – also points to the instability of power structures. Resistance is also not always a stable formation, and not all forms of resistance are inclusive. At times, decolonial or postcolonial teaching runs the risk of creating a romanticized image of the revolutionary subject, in particular of the global South. Therefore, mangoes & bullets encourages people making use of the materials

to take into account the particularities of the setting and reflect on how they could be used appropriately. For instance, some might not feel included or be critical of certain aspects. To give an example: A song might very well represent people's experience with racism, but at the same time advertise the neoliberal principal that 'if you try hard enough, you can make it', thus disregarding the complex interrelations of racism and capitalism/neoliberalism. [One should engage with the resources] in a critical manner and be aware of their pitfalls. (<https://www.mangoes-and-bullets.org/about-mangoes-and-bullets/>)

CONCLUSION

Be it wool or be it academic teaching, transformational processes take long, require endurance and may lead to unexpected outcomes. The transformation of the academic classroom to a site of pluralist, conscious and non-hierarchical learning is a process that is only about to begin, and might result in far-reaching changes for political science as a discipline, but may also face contestation or even backlashes. Yet we are convinced that it is time for political science to become much more aware of its controversial roots, and engage in a process of institutional, epistemic, curricular and didactical decolonization.

Doing so involves de- and reconstruct elements that have since long been taken for granted, such as the political science curriculum or knowledge hierarchies between lecturers and students. Their Eurocentric patterns need to be brought to the fore in order to create greater awareness for their effects on learning and teaching environments. Indeed, our didactical experiences

have shown that forms of exclusion and discrimination may be present even in spaces that seem universally accessible at first glance. Overcoming them means to become more outspoken about academic roles and hierarchies and to be aware about academic privileges so as to unlearn them step by step, even if this requires courage also on the lecturer's side. Also, silencing and de-naming are well-known practices, which have resulted in curricula that do not reflect historical awareness for the discipline's colonial roots, and fail to pay attention for the diversity of political science.⁴ Last, this would also require to represent transnational and transhistorical connections within academic curricula, theory co-creation and research strategies.

Our examples have provided insights into forms of learning and teaching that aim at de-constructing some of these epistemological and formal hierarchies that pervade political science. We have demonstrated how different didactical tools are able to change (or at least set an impulse to alter) the conditions under which students explore social science curricula and encounter political science's concepts and research strategies. While a didactical intervention is meant to create an impulse, it often takes several of them to substantially change a classroom's learning environment. Still, these impulses are worthwhile and may sink in as vivid examples of a different learning environment.

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⁴ Indeed, political science as a discipline has expanded considerably during the past two decades and has – at its ever-contested fringes – created room for engagements with post- and decolonial approaches, queerfeminism, critical geography or political ecology, to name a few recent tendencies.

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Chapter 14

Decolonizing Development Studies: Teaching in Zhengistan

Aram Ziai

Let me start with a biographical note on how I ended up teaching development studies.¹ I entered the university majoring in English literature. It was only after I learnt about the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and a brilliant course in development sociology in Trinity College Dublin (thanks to Treasa Galvin for that) that I found I could not spend my life with English literature – not in a world in which people are dying each day not because there is a lack of food or medicine or clean water but because relations of power deny them the access to it. Switching to sociology and political science, I began focusing on development studies, which seemed to be the subject dealing most substantially with global inequality and with measures to ameliorate it. Feeling uneasy about development cooperation as a career because of increasing doubts that it was tackling the real causes of inequality – and having applied in vain for positions at a number of NGOs – I ended up pursuing a PhD in development studies. So what is wrong in that? Why do I think it needs to be decolonized? There are some practical experiences and some theoretical insights I will mention in response. After that, I will provide some examples of how I try to decolonize the teaching on the subject.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES

My motivation for dealing with the issue of decolonizing development studies stems from a number of experiences in the academic sphere, which demonstrate to what extent development studies still keep a colonial gaze. Typical

¹ I would like to thank Franziska Müller and Daniel Bendix for their constructive criticisms and helpful comments.

tropes and narratives – some people by definition being ‘experts’ and others by definition ‘in need’ – provide a telling account.

When I taught in the PhD program at the Centre for Development Research in Bonn, there were twelve PhD candidates in social science preparing to go out for fieldwork and being taught courses. I asked them two questions: Where do you come from? And what is the country you are doing research on? The result was not surprising: All Europeans were doing research on another country in the South, all the non-Europeans were doing research on their home country. This raises the question: who is qualified to do research on others? Why does it seem so self-evident that people from the North possess the capability to do research on other countries while people from the South do not?

In the research colloquium of the same research centre, the facilitator one day started out by saying that we are so honoured to have as a guest professor so-and-so from the University of so-and-so, a renowned expert on Ghana, who has spent so much time in Ghana and knows the country so well . . . next to him, two Ghanaians were sitting, writing their PhD on Ghana. Whose knowledge is considered as expertise? How many years do you have to spend in a country to know all the metaphors, sayings, slang, the history and culture and habitus as well as those who have lived there all their life?

There was a meeting between researchers from my home university and the University of Cape Coast on a funding application for a research cooperation: The program required us to prove that we from the North were building their capacity in the South – while they had six different MA or MPhil programs in development studies and we had none (but would have indeed appreciated to have one). Who is by definition in need of assistance? And who is by definition qualified to build the capacity of another?

I received a request by the German Research Foundation to review an application for funding: The topic was transitional justice in Brazil. I have neither worked on transitional justice nor on Brazil, but since I do development studies, I am assumed to know Brazil, as its primary characteristic seems to be that it is a ‘less developed country’. Who possesses knowledge about the other? Or at least knowledge about ‘development’, that process which allegedly has occurred in the ‘developed’ just the way as it is occurring in the ‘developing’ countries? This assumption is the reason why the World Bank feels no shame in sending experts to ‘develop’ a country they do not even speak the language of: they know how to do ‘development’ and this knowledge is universal.

As a last example, I met a former PhD student who instead of finishing her dissertation went into development practice and worked for the GIZ, the German development agency. Knowing my critical attitude, she felt the need to justify this step and said: ‘You know, development cooperation is really

effective in poverty reduction', before adding 'for Northern academics, that is'. Who is being assisted? Who gains money, prestige, moral credibility and experience from the task of 'developing' others?

All the answers are related to a difference between 'us' and 'them' which is at the foundation of development studies, to the history of colonialism and the traces it left on the successor discourse of 'development'. One could describe this as an ontology based on colonial difference. This diagnosis is of course informed by postcolonial and post-development (PD) critiques.

THEORETICAL INSIGHTS

My perception of the problematic aspects of development studies had been inspired by my engagement with the PD school in development theory (see above all Escobar 2012; Esteva and Prakash 1998; Rahnema 1997; Rist 2012; Sachs 1992; for other approaches to decolonize development studies see Eriksson Baaz 2005; Kapoor 2008; McEwan 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2012; Wainwright 2008) (see of course also the contributions of Cornwall and Harcourt in this volume). I had pursued this critique as a PhD topic despite the strong advice not to – a sympathetic professor had warned me that people working in 'development' would detest the critique and others would simply not care about it. Yet the critique was too gripping for me to be ignored. My interest had started with the curious question: if 'development' refers to a positive state of society, then who is actually qualified or legitimized to define it?. To this, PD replied: Development experts claim to be qualified to do so, but in fact exert power in the name of improvement.² The concept promised affluence to formerly colonized countries to keep them from joining the communist camp and continues to spread the creed of the growth society: you need more goods in order to have a good life. However, it became perfectly clear to me that a positive state of society is a matter of democratic debate, not of expert knowledge.

The insights of PD and related postcolonial critiques concerning the features of development discourse can be summed up in the following six points (Ziai 2016; for the general debate about PD see Klein and Morreo 2019; Kothari et al. 2019; Matthews 2010; Ziai 2018):

- Naturalization of a universal scale: The first and maybe most fundamental achievement of this critique is the insight that the categories and strategies of 'development' imply a certain perspective which is contingent – in

2 This practice (referred to as 'trusteeship' by Cowen and Shenton 1996) is closely linked to state policy and scientific knowledge (Nandy 1988) and has been employed by capitalist and socialist systems alike (Berger 1974).

contrast to being the natural and normal way of seeing things: that societies can be compared according to their ‘level of development’. Yet that there are ‘developed’ and ‘less developed’ countries, and that the latter can be found in Africa, Asia and Latin America and are in need of ‘development’, development experts, development projects and development aid provided by the former, are assumptions that are by no means self-evident. They constitute a historically specific way of looking at different societies and global inequality, naturalizing the norms and historical processes of the European Self.

- Othering and the problematization of deviance: The naturalization of the Self enables the problematization of the Other as deviant. The universal scale allows to measure and compare according to a Eurocentric norm and thus to define the majority of humanity as ‘underdeveloped’. The Other is not seen as different, but as a deficient version of the Self, which is why development discourse operates by identifying deviance from the norm as inferiority (the ‘less’ or ‘underdeveloped’).
- Promise of ‘development’ as a mechanism of legitimizing intervention: Even if the prescriptions of development discourse do not work, the development industry claims to have learnt from its earlier mistakes, reaffirming its knowledge on how to improve other people’s lives, but now rendering visible a new aspect hitherto neglected (poverty, basic needs, women, the environment, the market, good governance, ownership, microcredits, remittances, etc.). Failures thus lead only to a reformulation of the promise, and thus to a renewal of the cycle diagnosis-recipe-promise-failure.
- Hierarchization of different types of knowledge: This sometimes also concerns cultures and values, with one type (universally applicable expert knowledge, typically claimed by trustees) being privileged and the other (local, ‘unscientific’ knowledge) denigrated. This disregard of indigenous knowledge includes philosophical questions, for example, an ontology of interrelatedness like in Ubuntu, or a cosmology in which human beings are part of nature (as in Buen Vivir) and not opposed to or above it.
- Depoliticization: The discourse of ‘development’, at least the one employed by most development agencies, assumes that ‘development’ is something that benefits everyone and therefore no one can object to, something removed from conflicts over political and economic questions, portraying positive social change as a technical matter related exclusively to the presence or absence of knowledge, technology and capital. Simply put, this discourse wants to help the poor without hurting the rich (on a national and international level). It has to do so in order to gain support and legitimacy, but in doing so neglects an analysis of the structural causes of poverty and depoliticizes the conflicts and divisions in society.
- Masculinism: PD’s thin feminist current has revealed that the concept of ‘development’ is in fact not gender-neutral: its privileging of rationality,

productivity, technology and mastery over nature has clearly masculinist and misogynist connotations. According to Shiva (1992, 211), the ‘treatment of nature as a resource which acquires value only in exploitation for economic growth has been central to the project of development’ and is certainly not unrelated to the ‘fundamental dichotomizing between male and female, mind and matter, objective and subjective, the rational and the emotional which has been a central feature of European modernity at least since Bacon’. Correspondingly, the practice of ‘development’ comprises interventions that reproduce the colonial white male saviour narrative, ‘saving brown women from brown men’ (Spivak 1988, 92).

In this diagnosis, the colonial legacies of development studies are clearly visible. During the period of liberation and independence, the task of ‘civilising the uncivilised’ was replaced by that of ‘developing the underdeveloped’, and the number of people in the West who openly claimed that ‘they’ were unable to govern themselves, so ‘we’ had to do the job, became smaller and smaller. But the pattern remained: people in the North defined their own society as the ideal norm and conceived of deviance merely in terms of backwardness: a ‘transformation of geo-cultural differences into historical stages’ (Nandy 1992, 146) took place. The knowledge about ‘development’ is thus the knowledge about how to improve the lives of others which have been defined as less advanced in an imagined scale which measures qualities agreed upon as crucial by those on top of the scale. It does not measure hospitality, social cohesion, happiness, racism, suicides, destruction of nature or the capacity to universalize the current way of life (impossible for societies based on oligarchic consumption or imperial modes of production).

Of course, development studies have progressed a great deal since the 1960s. Nevertheless, some elements of the colonial legacy still endure and sometimes lead to irritating questions like those mentioned in the first part of this chapter. While racism is still primarily a problem of white populations today (no wonder after five centuries of justification of colonialism), it is not exclusively so: the trusteeship (Cowen and Shenton 1996) for the ‘underdeveloped’ has usually been taken over by national elites after independence – but still the ‘reassertion of colonial classifications of difference is often invoked to justify development interventions’ (Kothari 2005, 84) vis-à-vis poor or ‘backward’ or indigenous peoples. Some of these interventions certainly have been beneficial but others have not: according to a UN Habitat estimate, 15 millions of people are displaced each year by projects of ‘development’ (Farha 2011, 8). And although the discourse of ‘development’ was superficially far removed from notions of racial superiority, it still relied on an asymmetrical distribution of expert knowledge for positive social change (to be found in the North) and engaged in the infantilization

and medicalization of the South, proceeding by ‘creating “abnormalities” (the “illiterate”, “underdeveloped”, “malnourished”) which it would later treat and reform’ (Escobar 2012, 41).

So how do we get rid of this type of thinking?

TEACHING

I regularly teach courses on development studies in our BA and MA political science as well as in the MA global political economy and development at the University of Kassel/Germany. Since my PhD in 2003, I have been trying to question the paradigm of ‘development’ and familiarize the students with PD and other postcolonial critiques. Next to decolonizing the canon and including writers like Escobar, Spivak, Rodney, Said, Fanon, Mohanty, Bhabha, Kabeer, Nandy and Césaire, there are a number of didactic tools I use to unsettle their views on ‘development’.

My definition or yours?

In the first session of development studies seminars, I ask the students to write down their definition of ‘development’ and let them discuss their definitions in small groups. Usually there are vast differences in scope, normativity, level of abstraction and political orientation which become visible. Then I show them a slide of a black and a white (ok: actually yellow) Lego figure shaking hands and simultaneously saying: ‘development’. However, while one thinks ‘investments’, the other thinks ‘justice’. Reflecting on the discussion and the picture, the students often arrive at the conclusion that there is not one correct definition of the term but several with different implications, and that cooperation about ‘development’ takes place despite conflicting definitions, leading to (productive or problematic) misunderstandings.

Alternatively, I ask them about different projects of ‘development’ they have heard of and write down what they deal with or try to achieve. Usually a long list and wide array of projects from roads and dams to biodiversity protection and women’s empowerment is the result. Then I show the slide of an amoeba, coupled with the quote by Esteva that the concept has been redefined so often that it has become a meaningless concept, ‘with contours that are as precise as those of an amoeba’ (1992, 10). Ideally, this results in students always defining what they mean when they use the term.

A different voice

A possible continuation of this session on the concept of development is to give the students numerous definitions of ‘development’ from various

approaches (e.g., Rostow, Cardoso, Lal, Sen), which have in common that despite all differences they see the term as denoting something positive. Then they are presented with a speech by Libia Grueso from the Proceso de Comunidades Negras in Colombia which portrays the process of ‘development’ as negative: ‘The capital of development aid, foreign loans, investments etc. is used for a “development” serving to create mechanisms of resource exploitation in our territories. For us, this “development” means the monetarization of our social relations. Even nature is transformed into a commodity by these development projects. The so-called “development plans” of transnational capital and resource exploitation spell the death of our cultural values and life itself’.³ Against this ‘development’ – resource exploitation, commercialization and cultural imperialism – the communities are organizing resistance. The confrontation with this oppositional view on ‘development’ illustrates that the supposedly normal normative order is contingent and dependent on perspective. Grueso’s critique can be followed up by investigations on negative consequences of ‘development’ projects and programmes such as social and ecological destruction, from the Narmada Valley (India) and Polonoroeste (Brazil) to the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline.

The anti-politics machine

As for me, the most frequent response for the students confronted with global inequality is working in organizations of ‘development aid’. Ferguson’s work (1994) on the Anti-Politics Machine (APM) (and the more up-to-date work by Li 2007) is a good way to describe the limitations of this kind of organizations. The development apparatus, according to him, depoliticizes questions of poverty and inequality as problems of ‘development’ soluble by technocratic solutions. These technocratic solutions assume the problem of inequality can be solved by transfers of capital or knowledge or experts dealing with an alleged lack of these, but these solutions are not touching upon questions of power related to the state apparatus or the capitalist system of production. At the same time, the apparatus does perform operations having a political dimension in that they intervene in conflicts and channel resources to one party or another, while being under the guise of a non-political, ‘development’ project devoted to the common good. This can also serve to mask or sideline colonial relations of power. The APM can be briefly illustrated by the quote of the expert asking Ferguson what could be done against the poverty in Lesotho and who, being advised to bring his government to contemplate sanctions against apartheid to support the unions in South Africa where most men work as migrant labourers, replied ‘No, no! I mean development!’ (cited in Ferguson

³ <https://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/colombia/libia.htm> (accessed 9 December 2019).

1994, 284). This can be used to show that inequality can be perceived in different ways (e.g., generally as problem related to a lack of technology or knowledge or related to relations of power) and that the ‘development’ organizations’ perception of problems is shaped by the instruments at their disposal (non-political ‘development’ interventions) (Ferguson 1994, 69). Other ways to perceive inequality and to act upon it are thus possible, ‘development’ is ‘far from being the only available form of engagement with the great questions of poverty, hunger, and oppression’ (Ferguson 1994, 279). In this context, students are familiarized with other areas in which poverty reduction would be possible: abandoning neoliberal policies of market liberalization, controlling the repatriation of profits of multinational companies and capital flight of elites, implementing tax reforms, supporting labour migration and remittances. They are also familiarized with protest movements all over the world and the legal (courts and accountability mechanism like the World Bank Inspection Panel) and extra-legal methods (civil disobedience, riots) that they have used.

End extreme wealth

As a complement to this, the contingency and sometimes absurdity of the development apparatus and its jargon can be illustrated by the comic ‘End extreme wealth’ by Liv Stromquist, produced for an album of the band ‘The Knife’.⁴ The comic’s proposal of ending extreme wealth as a new Millennium Development Goal shifts the perception of the problem of poverty. It highlights the arbitrariness of focusing on the poor as the objects of ethnographic research and charity (‘Let’s welcome UN researcher Blinky Blonk, who has studied people who live in extreme wealth for several years, in order to help them. You spent several months doing a participant observation at a horse polo club’) and also the lack of respect with which they are sometimes treated in ‘development’ aid (‘Say after me: I don’t need to buy this!’). Familiar topics and phrases are being applied to different contexts, leading to different people being targeted by ‘development’ interventions. This leads to new policies of redistribution entering the territory of what can be said and thought in the struggle against inequality, such as the ‘micro-snatch’: ‘snatching’ a medium-sized mansion from the super-rich could help house twenty-five to thirty homeless people, an expert reports in the comic.

Ethiopians in Zhengistan – an alternative history narrative

For understanding the historical context of global inequality, engaging with colonialism is crucial. To do it in a more original way, I sometimes give a

⁴ <https://qz.com/526676/hey-un-why-dont-you-try-ending-extreme-wealth/> (accessed 12 December 2019).

lecture based on the imagination of an alternative history. Starting from a map of the voyages of the Chinese explorer Zheng He in the early fifteenth century, arguably commanding the most technologically advanced fleet of the time, I note that he has circled the Asian continent clockwise, making it to the Persian Gulf and the shores of East Africa. So one of the ‘barbarian countries’ he tells the Chinese about is today’s Iran, my father’s home. But what if he had circled the continent in the opposite direction and had arrived in the country my mother came from, today’s Germany? And what if Zheng He had for some reason regarded the very western part of Asia he had ‘discovered’ to be a continent on its own? What if he had mistakenly assumed to have arrived in a part of Ethiopia? And what if that ‘continent’ had been named after him? People in Germany would perhaps live in Zhengistan and be referred to as Ethiopians.⁵ Thus, this narrative shows the traces of colonialism which are present literally in our world view: in the naming of ‘America’ (after Amerigo Vespucci) and the ‘Indians’ (because of Columbus’ misconception that he had arrived in India), but also in the Mercator map distorting the size of Europe and placing it in the middle and on top. Continuing the narrative, the lecture switches perspectives and imagines how German society would look like after five centuries of colonization by the Chinese, for example, transplanting the experiences of the Herero genocide to Hessia (the region in which my university is situated), speculating how our agriculture and resource base would look like if they had been geared to serve the needs of some other country. How a democratically elected government by leftist social democrats would have been stopped by a coup (like in Chile, 1973) or prevented by an IMF intervention (like in South Korea, 1998). Our soccer players in the major Asian leagues would be ridiculed and compared to apes because of their facial and body hair. Some of our cultural practices concerning female dancers in Carnival might be considered misogynist and barbaric, and we would be constantly asked to distance ourselves from Christian fundamentalists and terrorists. Last but not least, a host of volunteers from China would visit us each year to take care of orphans or fight poverty – often without any qualification apart from their origin in a ‘developed’ country. The switching of perspectives attempts to engender a deeper understanding of relations of power sedimented in history.

Discussing development obstacles in Beijing, 2058

A similar instrument has been employed by Franziska Müller (2015) in an essay presenting a discussion of development planners and consultants in a

⁵ An interesting detail of the real history is that Ethiopia’s emperor Selassie donated blankets and coffee to war-ravaged Germany to relieve the plight of the population after World War II (Vestal 2011, 90; <https://www.deutschland.de/pl/node/2929>, accessed 11 December 2019).

restaurant in Beijing forty years in the future. The East-North cooperation by the Chinese donors with European crisis regions confronts some obstacles to the transformations, necessary to reach the post-industrial development goals 2060, mainly located in backward-looking mentalities in European recipient countries. Meanwhile, the waitress in the restaurant (a migrant from the United States) spends all her money on Skype talks with her sick daughter back home, making her boss ponder about the reasons for underdevelopment in the West.

The same ‘try walking in my shoes’ method is employed by an as yet unpublished comic script (authored by Daniel and me) in which a German development expert has a nightmare of being confronted with an Ecological Adjustment Program in his hometown: industries are closed, cars are confiscated, his house has to make way for a biodiversity preservation area and he is resettled somewhere in a bleak countryside and told to engage in subsistence agriculture.

Sachs in Tepito

Following the PD approach, the critique of colonialism and ‘development’ leads to an investigation of alternatives: alternative concepts like Buen Vivir or Ubuntu and alternative practices of commoning, reviving indigenous knowledge and building economies of solidarity (Klein and Morreo 2019; Kothari et al. 2019; Ziai 2018). For their seminar papers, students are encouraged to analyse such concepts and practices. In this context, there is an episode that Wolfgang Sachs narrates about his visit in Mexico City, in the quarter named Tepito, after the earthquake of 1985, where he encountered such practices. After being proudly presented the efforts of self-organized communities to rebuilt and improve the housing and infrastructure, he could not help making a relativizing remark: ‘It’s all very well but, when it comes down to it, these people are still terribly poor’. To this he received a stiff reply: ‘We are not poor, we are Tepitans!’ (Sachs 1999, 8). Discussing this remark, it becomes obvious that being judged according to a universal scale and having one’s identity thus classified as poor was seen as a kind of insult which degraded the efforts that had been achieved according to the people’s own evaluation. This has implications for the general measurement of ‘development’. Following the Tepitan way, such a universal scale would be illegitimate, and people would decide themselves what their society should strive for and according to which goals they should be measured. Democratic debate would replace expert knowledge on what an improvement in living standards could look like.

Noble savages in the West

To prevent the critique of Western modernity to be associated exclusively with indigenous knowledge (Kiely 1999), it seems useful to take into account

non-Western modernizers and Western critics. Intellectuals of a counter-hegemonic tradition like Ivan Illich or Robert Kennedy have challenged the measurement of progress through the GDP and the diffusion of Western institutions and technology, implying or postulating different measurements. For Illich (1973) that would be autonomy and conviviality, for Kennedy a number of features mentioned in his speech denouncing the GDP (because it also measures, e.g., air pollution, nuclear warheads and cigarette advertising): among others, he mentions ‘the intelligence of our public debate’, ‘the beauty of our poetry’, ‘our wisdom’ and ‘our compassion’.⁶

OPEN QUESTIONS

Some of the experiences with these tools have nevertheless led me to questions I have not found entirely satisfactory answers to.

The rejection of the claim that the industrial capitalist Western society is universally desirable (which stems from the motivation to avoid Eurocentric arrogance) is often perceived as cynical legitimization of misery and violence in the non-West, in particular if articulated from a position of relative affluence (Matthews 2017). How can we address the relations of power in this universalist claim without undermining the universalism underlying struggles in the South for a better life which is often associated with Western standards of living? Is it enough to differentiate between basic needs and a specific (Western) way of satisfying them? Clearly, it is not for academics to preach a frugal lifestyle to poorer people (Marglin 1990, 27). Equally clearly, the dominant discourses and manipulative advertising certainly shape the desires of people.

Related to this it can be argued that teaching postcolonial critique to students from the South who are more interested in being taught the mainstream reproduces the subject position of the ‘development expert’. Is this an ‘enabling violation’ (Spivak) countering these discourses and manipulations or academic arrogance of those who can afford to be critical towards the goal of material improvements at all costs?

Another point: We are still using the term ‘development’ despite arguments to avoid it, because it makes life easier: people know what we’re talking about and it sounds less offensive than ‘neo-colonialism’ and more encouraging than ‘global inequality’. But can we really resignify a concept which for the past seven decades has always implied that there are some societies which are more ‘developed’ and these are located in the global North? And that there are experts with privileged knowledge on positive social

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2012/may/24/robert-kennedy-gdp> (accessed 11 December 2019).

change? On the other hand: can we really turn away from a concept which for the majority of the population is linked with the ideal of a better life?

Does it make more sense to strive for a universal measurement of a good society which is oriented more towards values of hospitality and compassion or one which comes about through a decolonial intercultural dialogue? Or should we reject all these universalisms in favour of a pluralism of local (and hopefully consensus-based) concepts of a good life?

As mentioned in the introduction, we see this volume as part of an ongoing dialogue, and we would welcome responses to these questions, for example, in the form of contributions to the forum www.convivialthinking.org.

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Chapter 15

Intermezzo III – Academia

Robbie Shilliam, Gurminder K. Bhambra,
Peo Hansen, Julia Suárez-Krabbe, Olivia U.
Rutazibwa and Mariam Popal

Robbie Shilliam: There are many aspects to a decolonizing project, and not all of them are or should be about democracy. Some of them are about pursuit and protection of self-determination, some of them are about interest, clash of interests. Some of them have guns. But if we as intellectuals and especially intellectuals in the academy, if we're talking about our place in a decolonization struggle, then we have to struggle on the terrain of the democratization of knowledge. That has very practical and material effects, because it leads to issues such as representation. And the idea that you cannot simply go and presume that you know best about a community which you are going to clear out: 'We know best. Well, these slums down the road, WE know what they need to be. We don't have to ask them how they're living'. Wouldn't we need to ask: What parts of your life are actually okay? What parts of your life do you struggle and get dignity in? And what parts of your life do you not like? Shall we fix the drains, but not necessarily destroy the houses? Our place in the democratization of knowledge and decolonization broadly conceived is all about that. It's about actually struggling to ensure that the holders of power have to ask. The answers they get might be very contradictory, but that doesn't matter to me, that's not the first-order problem. The first-order problem is: These people know something about their own condition and they might know it better than you: Ask them!

My own practice is very invested in what I understand my constituency to be. I don't think intellectuals and academics are free-floating, I think all of us have particular constituencies which we are accountable to. They can change and they might be multiple, there might be different scales, but nevertheless the issue of constituency is absolutely crucial to me. It's not the people who read the journals you publish the articles in. My constituencies are people of African descent in the diaspora. I see my role as helping to retrieve the best

traditions of creative survival in this constituency, and making it shine. And that's obviously a co-creator of knowledge, sometimes a learner of knowledge, sometimes someone who's got the money – because they got the job – to pick up someone from the airport. Very, very simple things. Sometimes it's representing. You are someone who's got a privileged voice because you belong to an institution which is recognized as a knowledge-producing place. Sometimes you do have to represent. You have to be careful and know when to do that, and often it's because you're asked to do that. There's not a universal answer to it, so each person has to find their constituency, maybe that changes over time as well, and that's the relation of accountability.

Gurminder K Bhambra: In terms of practice, I guess one of the things that I would want to talk about is teaching. And in terms of teaching one of the things that I make absolutely sure of within my reading list, within the material that I present to my students, is that there is a diversity of authors. This is not only a diversity of authors within the further reading or the additional reading but in terms of the essential reading that the students are required to do. I ensure that not all the readings are by white men. And I think that is a small aspect but it points students to the idea that knowledge is produced by a diversity of people and that by taking these different positions into account, we can actually have a broader, more expansive engagement with the topics that we are interested in. I also try to make sure that the topics that they deal with don't ever have weeks nine and ten – which are the last two weeks of the term – on race and gender. I think about how these could already be introduced at the beginning of modules or better integrated into the module as a whole.

Peo Hansen: I'm in political science, EU studies. In terms of decolonization of these subject fields: We're not there, we still have to learn about colonialism, we still have to learn about that history. And I don't think that time is speaking for that enterprise. On the contrary, I think that colonial tropes, colonial notions are seeping back – well, they have been present all along – but there is way too little questioning of those subject areas. So my work is still very much just continuing to emphasize again, to historicize and to learn much more about colonialism. I think that's one of my critiques because postcolonial matters, they come in, but the problem there is that, especially in social science – in humanities it's different because you have different empirical materials – but in social science postcolonial stuff can come in, students learn about postcolonial theories and so on, but they don't learn about colonialism. And . . . I don't think that's a very good way of going about it. So one thing I tell my students is for instance, because I do that myself, is just to tell them that they should do as an experiment, just to go to the library, take a few volumes of a periodical, let's say 'The Economist', say 1954 to 1956, just go over it, sit and read, and you know, just glance over it. After a while

you realize that you sort of start to get into what's going on, you will connect to the discourse, and after a while you will start to register everything. You realize, ah, they talked about that in another issue, and oh, here is President Nasser again, and then this is the Suez crisis, or whatever this is, you know, all of these things; because that's being in that time and learning about that mindset. We lack that; it's time-consuming, and that's what I also say, you know, we need to realize that acquiring knowledge is not this [scratches his palm like flipping book pages or scrolling on imaginary tablet], not at all. We have to pay more attention and to be more meticulous. But there are ways that you can get sort of get your mindset straight and there are tools that can be used to stimulate [stimulate] students' curiosity. To stimulate people in a direction that they thought they would never go and that . . . the way we do it generally . . . it doesn't stimulate that. So that would be just one illustration.

I don't really like social science, I think it needs to be questioned. I think social sciences have so much to learn from humanities, you have to bring that in, you have to bring literature, the novel, film and music, and all of that has to come into social science. Because social science is so square and often times so abstract or dry that it sort of secedes from life itself. It needs that sort of influence. You come into a classroom of political science students, and they sort of have the assumption that they don't need to pay attention to literature, for instance, or they don't need to pay attention to art or film – 'it has nothing to do with the political world'. That's still a very common notion. We perpetuate that in our teaching by simply saying: We do social science, we do political science, or sociology and so on. I always talk about that and I try to bring in teaching methods that move us away from that very dry social science perspective.

Julia Suárez-Krabbe: A very important step is the decolonization of the curricula in universities. So that we don't teach these false canons. If we follow the kind of disciplinary canons as they are dominantly accepted, then we are teaching a very false and a very biased version of the problems of the world and even about history. We are teaching something completely upside down in relation to what has actually happened and to the problems that really concern people in the world. And that people actually have theorized about a lot also historically throughout the world. Decolonization of the curriculum would be to have a serious discussion on colonialism as part of a theory of science course. Or to have Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter or Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, people that ask questions and conceptualize things differently without forgetting these colonial and racist practices that are constitutive of why these other problems were forgotten or ignored by these canons. To me that is important not only in terms of the disciplines, but it can also have real material effects. Because the people who will then be experts and who will be able to teach that will not be the same usual suspects, the usual

white suspects. We will necessarily have different requirements in terms of peoples' knowledge in academia. That in itself would be part of dismantling the master's house. Having people like Audre Lorde or Lewis Gordon in academia as real experts in this thinking, and not as minorities in academia. What we often find is that we are isolated in small niches around the world, but to have that as constitutive of the curricula, as what you teach and what is expected to be understood and known. When students come and want to study or do a project on racism or islamophobia, there are colleagues who tell them that you cannot deal with that academically. 'We understand your anger, but you need to conceptualise that academically'. There is a lot of conceptualization on racism and islamophobia in academia, but the students are basically told off and scared off. And that limits radical change, because they are not allowed to pursue questions that really have consequences.

I started trying to put into practice this idea of shifting the geography of reason that the Caribbean Philosophical Association has heralded. This means to think not only through theories that are accepted in academia, but through theories that have been excluded, that are not necessarily regarded as a theory. In my work I have worked in this shifting of the geography of reason by thinking with the perspectives and the teachings of indigenous authorities in Colombia. That was how I started to elaborate on decolonial methodological takes. It means that we are with people not as people who provide empirical material but as people with whom you analyse processes of power and propose to change these issues. I also worked with the Decoloniality Europe Network where we, among others, did this Charter of Decolonial Research Ethics that pinpoints the different privileges that the researcher has and tries to work against them. Among others, the privilege of deciding who you work with and of expecting people to accept the questions that you find interesting: 'If you want to work with us, then you research this, for example'. I have also been thinking through the issue that I've mentioned before, of situating ourselves according to our locus of enunciation. I call this decolonial historical realism: taking into account our legacies and the differences in our legacies. That means also that very different things are required from us in terms of decolonization: There are other things in research and in teaching.

Olivia U Rutazibwa: I consider myself an international relations (IR) scholar, but IR as a field of study that tries to speak to relations in the international sphere or in the global sphere as well as very much wanting to redefine what this IR might mean. It is about addressing the problematic nature of the discipline as it exists. Within that broader discipline I have always been fascinated by the combination of elements of blatant domination, invasion and intervention, and at the same time all the narratives about good intentions, human rights, and search for the good life. For me, one of the first decolonial

moves is really to try not to dismiss either of them and make them speak to each other and then see what comes out of it. So in what sense do the nice discourses actually perpetuate coloniality. And also to link these insights to how to speak differently about what is intervention: Is it just when we send military in or is it something that precedes all of that in our democracy promotion, development programmes and so on. Linked to that is to try to find ways to study places outside the Western context – not geographically, these can also be minorities in Europe – to unearth or redefine what we understand to be sovereignty and self-determination. Because a lot of it is seen as part of a nostalgic move of diaspora communities or African communities to go back to the 1960s, when we had these big struggles. If we connect those ideas with how we speak about the Responsibility to Protect and interventions today, we see that there is such a big difference in how sovereignty and self-determination are celebrated or discarded. In my research I try to unearth different understanding of sovereignty and self-determination and take them seriously, by looking for instance at Black Power thinking and actions in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, but also some of the processes that happened in Somaliland, how the state- and peace-building happened there. And how in contemporary Rwanda after the genocide discourses about self-value and self-determination really shape how the country sees itself and how it acts in the world. The decolonial element in that for me is to try to connect these three places that do not seem to have to do anything with each other. But they do if you reconnect them at the level of them speaking to the same thing. And the colonial reality has broken them up as different things. And secondly, I try not to treat them just as interesting case studies to delve into, but to really take insights from those particular enactments and understandings back to our theory formation around sovereignty and self-determination. Because for me this conversation needs to happen at that level as well.

Mariam Popal: The most dangerous and important aspect of any kind of critical research is that it can be very soon and very fast appropriated, and can become part of structures of dominance. If we take decolonization – and this is actually what also happened with postcolonial studies – whenever we take it as a form of apolitical theorization or questioning, then it just loses its importance. And it is whitewashed, if you will, in a Western academia. It just becomes part of power and we won't be able to use it. So the main question for me regarding this aspect would be: How can we define or relate to decolonization, as a movement maybe and as philosophizing that cannot be appropriated so fast, or at all? And I think we have some very good traditions, in postcolonial texts and Black texts, where these questions are dealt with very seriously. We have to take these archives seriously, go back to them and see

what we can do in order not to just build our careers with these words, but try to really stay critical. Even when it's hard for oneself or for ourselves. I am trying to see or define de- and postcolonial stances as forms of an *attitude* rather than titles and terms or things and thoughts that can be defined. I would rather see them as different forms of an *attitude* how you position yourself towards something or a question.

Index

- academia: anger in, 260; complicity in colonial thinking of, 2; curricula in, 6; epistemic racism in, 2; minorities in, 260; non-representation in, 2; racial stereotypes in, 2; recruitment in, 6; silencing in, 2
- academic curriculum, 192, 195, 196, 197, 198
- academic habitus, 180, 181, 183
- academic racism, 164, 167, 170, 173, 185; history of, 165, 169, 171
- accountability, 100–102, 105–7, 139–40, 257–58; as amplification and documentation, 108–10; as bringing work home, 104–5; as mutual benefit, 103–4; regarding participation and power, 110–11; as solidarity, 107–8
- activism, 234; academic, 232
- activist research, 76–80; critique of, 78–79
- AfD. *See* Alternative für Deutschland
- affirmative action, 164
- Alatas, Syed Farid, 20, 21
- alternative concepts and practices, 252
- Alternative für Deutschland, 1
- American Indian. *See* Native Americans
- anti-politics machine, 249
- anti-racist activism in academia, 168, 187, 188
- appropriation, 261
- backwardness, 247, 252
- Bacon, Francis, 247
- BAME students, 144, 145, 149, 150, 155, 158
- ‘Banania’ drink, 150
- The Battle of Algiers*, Gillo Pontecorvo, 152, 153
- Bhambra, Gurminder, 118, 122, 129
- black feminism, 179
- Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon, 147
- border securitization, 128
- Bourdieu, Pierre, 181
- Brazil, 244
- Brexit, 151, 153
- Brick Lane*, Monica Ali, 153
- British Empire, 144, 148, 149, 152–53, 155, 156
- canon, 63, 259; forgetting, ignoring, 259
- capitalism, 230, 237
- carceral: accountability/responsibility, 100–101, 106; feminism, 96, 104–5; logic, 97; state, 95–96, 104–5
- Caribbean Philosophical Association, 260
- Catholic Church, 42–43
- Césaire, Aimé, 150
- Chambers, Robert, 195–96

- change, 66, 260
 Charter of Decolonial Research Ethics, 260
 Chiapas, 117–31
 China, 251, 252
 class, 145, 149, 170, 173, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182
 classroom, 226–27; power relations in the, 226, 229 spaces, 144, 145, 146
 Colectiva Editorial de Mujeres en Prisión Hermanas en la Sombra. *See* Women Prisoner's Publishing Collective Sisters in Shadows
 collaborative research, 117–31
 colonial archive/images, 150
 colonialism, 247, 251; colonial difference, 245, 247; colonial gaze, 243; colonial legacies, 247
 coloniality: of knowledge, 72–75; of migration, 117, 120, 130
 communitarian governance systems, 120, 121
 community accountability & transformative justice movement, 94–99
 community accountable scholarship, 93–94, 107–8
community/comunidad, 117, 120–21, 125, 128
 complementarity, 42, 43–44
 connected sociologies, 20, 32, 33
 Connell, Raewyn, 20
 Continental Network of Indigenous Women, 39, 41
 Cosmovision, indigenous, 38, 41, 43, 45
 course design, 209, 210, 212, 217, 218, 221
 critical pedagogy, 219, 220, 221, 222
 critical whiteness, 164, 165, 184, 185, 187
 curricula, 230
 curriculum design, 151–58, 209, 212
 decentring, 228, 229
 ‘decolonize the curriculum’ campaign, 143
 decoloniality, as strategy, 66
 Decolonial Europe, 84–85
 Decolonial Research Ethics, 84–85; Charter of, 84
 decolonizing: academia, 205, 206, 219, 220; the canon, 248; decolonial intercultural dialogue, 254; development studies, 243
 De Lissovoy, Noah, 143–44, 151
 democracy, 227–28, 232
 depoliticization, 246, 249
 development 233; apparatus, 249; definition of, 245, 248; discourse of, 245, 247; displacement through, 247; knowledge about, 244, 247; measurement of, 246, 247, 252, 253, 254; oppositional view on, 248; projects of, 249; promise of, 246; studies, 247
 development cooperation, 243, 244
 development industry, 194, 195, 197, 201
 development studies, 207, 208; decolonizing, 219, 220, 221
 dialogue, intercultural, 46, 48–49
 dichotomies, 234
 didactic methods, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 209, 210, 212, 209, 213, 214, 215
Dirty Pretty Things, Stephen Frears, 153
 diversity, 64, 216, 217, 229–30, 258; politics, 167, 168, 184
 domination, 37, 67, 135, 136
 duality. *See* complementarity
 Eastern Europe, 136
 ecology, political. *See* human-nature relation
 economization of the university, 176, 177, 188, 189
 educación popular, 118–19, 124–27, 131
 Ejido, 120
 e-learning, 233–34
 Enlace Continental de Mujeres Indígenas. *See* Continental Network of Indigenous Women

- entanglement, 2
environmental justice. *See* human-nature relation
epistemic injustice, 137–38
epistemic racism, 172
epistemic violence, 37
epistemologies of the South, 122
Eribon, Didier, 183
Escobar, Arturo, 209, 211
Ethiopia, 251
European Union, 67
existentialism: African, 64; European, 64
exoticisation, 229
expertise, 244
experts, 66, 260
- Fals Borda, Orlando, 118, 123, 127, 129
Fanon, Frantz, 147, 150, 152, 153, 233; *Black Skin, White Masks*, 147
'fees must fall', 169
feminism, 3, 5; indigenous, 38, 41–42; postcolonial, 37, 58; Western, 37–38, 41; white, 67
feminist research ethics: accountability in, 75; critical self-reflexivity in, 75; critique of, 75; dichotomies in, 75; distance and proximity in, 80–83; irritation as productive in, 81, 86; politics of location in, 86; positionality in, 81–83
fieldwork, 244
Fine, Michelle, 80–81
France, 150, 153
Freire, Paulo, 118, 123, 127, 129
- gender, 246, 251
geography (academic discipline), 143, 144, 145, 152; Institute of British Geographers, 144; Royal Geographical Society (UK), 144
- Germany, 2, 153, 227–28, 231, 235–36, 251
- Ghana, 244
- global sociology, 19, 20
- growth, 245, 247
- Grueso, Libia, 249
- Gutiérrez Rodríguez, Encarnación, 117, 120, 130
- Haitian revolution, 19, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 232
- Halit Yozgat. *See* National-Socialist Underground
- Hall, Stuart, 191
- hierarchies, 46, 229, 230, 237, 238–39
- hierarchization, 246
- historical perspective, 63, 65–66, 67, 258
- history: colonial, 233–34; counter, 45; German colonial, 235–36; oral, 45
- humanities, 259
- human-nature relation, 233–34
- identity politics, 179, 182
- Illich, Ivan, 253
- India, 147–48, 157
- Industrial Revolution (UK), 149
- Institute of British Geographers, 144
- institutional racism, 168, 170, 173, 175; in Germany, 164, 167
- Inter-American Court of Human Rights, 39, 51–53, 57
- internationalization, 165, 167, 175, 176
- international relations, 2, 4, 227, 228, 260–61
- International Slavery Museum (ISM), Liverpool, 152, 154, 156–57
- intersectionality, 165, 176, 178, 179, 180, 182, 183, 188, 216, 217
- interventions, 261
- interview, 138
- Iran, 251
- justice, 52–56
- Kennedy, Robert, 253
- knowledge, 246; absences, silencing and denaming in production of, 230; activist, 234; co-construction of, 46; co-production of, 138, 139, 260; de-

- mocratization of, 257; ecology of, 58; ethics of, 137–38; indigenous, 252; non-academic, 230; non-Western, 231
- knowledge orders, coloniality in, 6
- knowledge production: dissemination of knowledge, 83–85; between global North and global South, 72
- lecturer positionality, 144, 145–51, 158
- lekil kuxlejal*, 121, 130
- Lesotho, 249
- linearity, 225–26, 231–32
- Liverpool, 146–47, 149, 152, 155–58; Albert Dock, 149, 156; International Slavery Museum (ISM), 152, 154, 156–57; Penny Lane, 155; Race riots, 156; Rodney Street, 156; University of Liverpool, 143, 155–56, 158
- The Lonely Londoners*, Sam Selvon, 153, 155
- Lord, Audre, 3
- Lorde, Audre, 67
- Malta, 148–49
- Marcus, George E., 120
- Marxism, 3, 138
- masculinism, 246
- master's tools, 64–65, 135, 137
- Me'phaa Indigenous People's Organization, 39, 51–52, 54–55
- meritocracy, 170, 189
- methodology, 65; collaborative, 46
- Mexico, 153
- middle class, 177, 178
- Mignolo, Walter, 145, 152
- migration, 4–5, 65
- multiple modernities, 21, 22
- multi-sited ethnography, 120
- myths, 66
- Namibia, 153
- narratives, 225–26; counter-hegemonic, 234; dominant, 99, 226, 227
- national-socialism, 236
- National-Socialist Underground, 235
- Native Americans, 231
- naturalization, 245
- nature, 247
- neoliberalism, 44, 45; in academia, 167, 168, 170, 171, 175, 177, 189
- Netherlands, 153
- new geopolitics of knowledge, 129
- 1919 Race Riots, 156
- North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), 119
- Nuremberg Trials, 74; impact on research ethics of, 73–74
- objectivity, 3–4, 6–7
- Organización de Pueblos Indígenas Mephaa's. *See* Me'phaa Indigenous People's Organization
- othering, 229, 246
- participatory action research (PAR), 99–100, 109–11, 118
- pedagogy, 144, 145, 155, 158
- plurality. *See* diversity
- policy, 140
- political science, 4, 227–28, 238–39; Eurocentric assumptions in, 227–28; German, 227; racism in, 227
- positionality, 123–25; authors', 224n1; epistemic, 135, 136, 260; epistemological, 226; hierarchies of, 229; political, 226; social, 136, 226, 234, 237, 258; students, 228–29; teachers', 226, 229
- postcolonial feminism: as plurilogue, 71; research ethics, 71; transnational feminist collaboration, 76–80
- post-development, 205, 215, 216, 245
- poverty reduction, 245
- power, 44, 50, 135, 136, 137, 237; relations of, 243, 245, 249, 250, 251, 253
- prison, 45–51
- privilege(s), 3–4, 7, 146, 151, 168, 170, 183, 184, 185, 192, 193
- Programa Democracia y Transformación Global* (PDTG), 72–73, 79

- protest movements, 250
Puerto Rico, 153
- racism, 146, 150, 247; scientific, 232, 236
reason, 65; geography of, 260
reflexivity, 123–25
representation, 139
research, 244; practices of, 3, 5–6; privilege in, 3–4
resistance, 233–34, 236–38
responsibility, 67, 140
#RhodesMustFall, 1
Rist, Gilbert, 195, 196
Rosanvallon, Pierre, 29, 30, 31
Royal Geographical Society (UK), 144
- Sachs, Wolfgang, 209
Said, Edward, 152
Santos, Boaventura de Sousa, 23
scale, universal, 245, 252
Scandinavia, 153
self-determination, 261
Selva Lacandona, 117, 119–21
sentipensar, 118, 122–23
settler colonialism, 231; German, 231
shame, 184, 185, 186, 187
silencing, 37–38, 43
Singapore, 148–49
situational analysis, 121
social sciences, 63, 64
sociology, 2, 4–5; of absences, 37–38; methods in, 5
Sousa Santos, Boaventura de, 118, 122
South Africa, 249
spirituality, indigenous, 41–42
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, 146, 152
student(s): evaluations 207; othering of, 229; positionality of, 228–29
subject positions. *See* positionality
subjects, of research, 139–40
- teaching development studies, 191, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 202
teaching post-development, 205, 207, 208, 209, 211, 215, 218, 219, 221, 222
- team teaching, 208, 209, 218
Tibet, 152
transatlantic slave trade, 155–56; International Slavery Museum (ISM), Liverpool, 152, 154, 156–57
transhistorical, 231–32, 233–34
transnational, 231–32, 234–35
Trouillot Michel-Rolph, 26, 27, 28
trusteeship, 247
Tzul Tzul, Gladys, 121
- United States, 153–54
universalism, 253, 254
universalization, 1, 4, 6, 38, 57–58, 64, 66, 227, 232
university: capitalist, 230; diversity in, 229–30
University of Liverpool, 143, 155–56, 158; Abercrombie Square, 156
- violence, 47–48, 51, 53–55; sexual, 39, 40, 51–57
- wealth, extreme, 250
Welsh identity, 146–47
white feminism, 164, 179
white identity, 166, 178, 182, 184, 186, 187
whiteness, 146, 149, 150, 192, 193; white guilt, 151, 155
women of color activism, 95–96.
See also community accountability & transformative justice movement
Women Prisoner's Publishing Collective
Sisters in Shadows, 46, 51
working class, 178, 179, 181, 182, 183
World Bank, 244
world society, 20
world-systems analysis, 65–66
writing culture, 120
- Zapatistas, 130
Zhengistan, 251

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