Knowing Peace

Decolonial Deliberations on Epistemic Oppression and Power Dynamics

Dissertation

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades

Doktor der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)

genehmigt durch die

Fakultät für Humanwissenschaften

der Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg

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geb. am 03. Juli 1992 in Neuenbürg

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Eingereicht am: 02. September 2024

Verteidigung der Dissertation am: 07. November 2024

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Contributions

This Doctoral Dissertation consists of a framework as well as three individual contributions. All the contributions are single-author papers.

- Paper 1:

  Merkle, Lena (2024), “Finding peace in a thought experiment? Eidetic variations on knowledge ownership as a perspective in peace education.

  Currently under review at *Alternatives*

- Paper 2:

  Merkle, Lena (2023), “Epistemological anarchism against epistemic violence? A rereading of Paul Feyerabend towards the decolonisation of academic knowledge production”, *Journal für Entwicklungspolitik*, Vol. 39 (1–2), pp.122–138. DOI: 10.20446/JEP-2414-3197-39-1-122.

  Included with the Approval of the Journal

- Paper 3:

  Merkle, Lena (2024), “Redefining a global cosmopolitanism. An attempt towards openness as a central concept in postcolonial conflict resolution”, *ZeFKo Studies in Peace and Conflict*. DOI: 10.1007/s42597-024-00119-0.

  Open Access Publication

Summary

Zusammenfassung in deutscher Sprache zur Dissertation mit dem Thema „Knowing Peace – Decolonial Deliberations on Epistemic Oppression and Power Dynamics“, vorgelegt von Lena Merkle, M.A.

Wissen ist ein in der Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (FKF) bisher eher wenig behandeltes Thema. Dies ist verblüffend, da es auf diversen Ebenen eine wichtige Rolle für das Feld spielt. Die vorliegende Dissertationsschrift befasst sich daher mit unterschiedlichen Dimensionen von Frieden, Gewalt und Wissen, um die Relevanz des Themas deutlich zu machen und zur Situierung der bereits existenten Diskurse und Forschungsstände im Feld beizutragen.

Zu diesem Zweck wird zunächst einmal die mangelnde Konzeptionalisierung des Dualismus aus Wissen für und über den Frieden festgestellt. Zum einen fällt es der FKF weiterhin schwer ein positives Konzept von Frieden zu definieren und sie greift in der Praxis oft auf negative Verständnisse von Frieden als Abwesenheit von Gewalt und Krieg zurück. Dabei werden existente Friedenskonzeptionen aus diversen Denktraditionen jenseits der eurozentristischen Universität weiterhin marginalisiert. Auch die im deutschen Diskurs traditionell präsente Theoretisierung der Friedenslogik erhält kaum noch Aufmerksamkeit. Zum anderen wird die Rolle, die Wissen für den Frieden spielen kann, und damit dem normativen Anspruch des Feldes entsprechen kann, friedensfördernd zu agieren, kaum thematisiert. Zwar sind einzelne Autor*innen in den letzten Jahren damit beschäftigt, Wissen und seine Relevanz für Gewalt in der FKF zu etablieren, die Friedensperspektive bleibt dabei jedoch meist auf der Strecke.

Zu diesem Zweck betrachte ich im Rahmenpapier drei Ebenen von Wissen, jeweils zunächst mit Bezug auf ihre Relevanz für Konflikte und hinsichtlich einer kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit gegenwärtigen Wissenspraktiken. Anschließend werden dann Potenziale für Frieden und Widerstand gegen gewaltsame Machtverhältnisse betrachtet. Die drei behandelten Ebenen sind der Zugang zu Wissen, die Produktion von Wissen und die Unterdrückung von Wissen.

Bezüglich des Zugangs zu Wissen werden die Dimensionen von Narrativ, Erinnerung und Diskurs thematisiert. Narrative spielen eine wichtige identitätsstiftende Rolle, durch die die eigene Gruppe von anderen abgegrenzt wird und die Welt kollektiv interpretiert und mit Sinn versehen wird. Gerade in Konflikten sind Narrative für die jeweilige Gruppenidentität von zentraler Bedeutung und können zur Loyalität und Opferbereitschaft der Gruppenmitglieder beitragen. Daher ist auch das Vorenthalten von Gegennarrativen oder Narrativen der gegnerischen Gruppe ein Mittel zur Kontrolle und wird benutzt um bewusst die Kohäsion zu steigern. Hierbei spielen auch Erinnerungen eine entscheidende Rolle, die von der Gruppe gemeinsam konstruiert und durch Repetition verstärkt werden. Politische Handlungen werden durch den Rekurs auf prägende kollektive Erinnerungen legitimiert und Neuinterpretationen von geschichtlichen Ereignissen gehen oftmals mit Regimewechseln einher, können aber in ihrer repressiven Form auch ein Anzeichen zunehmend autoritärer Regime sein. Das bewusste Hinterfragen von

historischen Interpretationen ist jedoch auch ein subversiver Ansatz, mit dem dominante und hegemoniale Geschichtsnarrative enttarnt und hinterfragt werden und zu diesem Zweck ein gängiges Vorgehen des dekolonialen Aktivismus. Dabei werden Diskurshoheiten und hegemoniale, staatstragende Ideologien in Frage gestellt. Diese schaffen den Rahmen des Sagbaren und sind dabei durchaus exklusiv. Damit einher geht auch die Kommodifizierung von Wissen sowie dessen Nutzung in Form von Informationen, um weiter Kontrolle auszuüben. Selbstverständlich können Narrative, Erinnerungen und Diskurse jedoch nicht nur Unterdrückung und Konflikt vorantreiben, sondern auch Frieden fördern. Durch Narrativen etwa, die Mitgefühl und Verständnis in den Mittelpunkt stellen, können Differenzen zwischen Konfliktparteien oder auch mit externen, intervenierenden Kräften an Dominanz verlieren und insbesondere Empathie gefördert werden.

Das Kapitel zu Wissensproduktion betrachtet wie Wissen in der Zivilgesellschaft und der Privatwirtschaft, im Bildungssektor und in Institutionen kreiert und produziert wird. Dabei wird Wissen nicht nur durch bewusste Prozesse kreiert, sondern entsteht auch durch alltägliche Interaktionen. Dementsprechend ist Wissen oftmals stark spezifisch und kontextuell. Gruppen produzieren Wissen aufgrund ihrer Bedürfnisse, Interessen und Aufgaben, welches der Allgemeinheit nicht immer zugänglich oder für diese verständlich ist. Gleichzeitig wird insbesondere Wissen marginalisierter Gruppen oftmals vom Mehrheitsdiskurs ausgeschlossen. Dabei entsteht in zivilgesellschaftlichen wie auch privatwirtschaftlichen Kontexten nicht nur neues Wissen, sondern dieses wird von dort auch verbreitet oder mit politischem Gewicht versehen. In der FKF ist hier insbesondere lokales Wissen über Konflikte und Konfliktgebiete von enormer Bedeutung. In Bildungsinstitutionen wird Wissen nicht nur vermittelt, sondern ebenfalls kreiert und neuinterpretiert und dieser Prozess kann durch entsprechende pädagogische Ansätze gefördert werden. Hier spielt auch die Friedensbildung eine entscheidende Rolle, die insbesondere emanzipatorische und selbstverantwortliche Kompetenzen fördert. Internationale Organisationen, politische Think Tanks und ähnliche Akteure haben sich in den vergangenen Jahren zunehmend als Orte der Wissensproduktion etabliert, betreiben dabei aber auch Agendasetting und nutzen ihren Einfluss, um bestimmte Perspektiven zu mainstreamen. Universitäten sind selbstverständlich zentrale Institutionen der Wissensproduktion, jedoch ebenfalls nicht unabhängig von politischen Interessen und neoliberaler Kommodifizierung. Dabei wird Wissen als Publikation zur Ware und Universitäten müssen in Rankings überzeugen. Hinzu kommt eine Hierarchisierung in kolonialer Kontinuität, in welcher der globale Norden Ursprung der Kriterien ist, nach denen er sich selbst die qualitative hochwertigste Forschung attestiert. Kritische, partizipative und kollaborative, aber auch aktivistische und subversive Forschungsansätze können hier die globalen Machtdynamiken der Wissensproduktion unterwandern und Alternativen schaffen, die nicht nur egalitärer und vielfältiger sind, sondern auch komplexere und hochwertigere Forschung leisten können.

Im Kapitel zur Unterdrückung von Wissen liegt der Fokus auf dem Konzept der epistemischen Ungerechtigkeit, welches Kontexte beschreibt, in welchen Menschen epistemisch diskriminiert und marginalisiert werden, wobei sie nicht als Wissende wahrgenommen werden und das Wissen, welches sie besitzen, nicht ernstgenommen oder als Wissen kategorisiert wird. Andererseits können Menschen auch epistemische Ungerechtigkeit erfahren, wenn das Wissen, welches ihnen zur Verfügung steht, ihnen nicht die Möglichkeit gibt, die eigenen Erfahrungen zur verstehen oder zu artikulieren. Epistemische Gewalt ist ein verwandtes Konzept, welches den Fokus stärker auf die strukturellen Dimensionen lenkt und insbesondere in einem post- und dekolonialen Kontext verwendet wird. Es thematisiert daher auch das strukturelle Stummmachen von subalternen kolonialen Subjekten. Damit sind diese Phänomene Formen epistemischer Unterdrückung. In extremen Formen kann epistemische Unterdrückung zu Auslöschung von Wissen oder zu Epistemiziden führen, wobei als Ziel oder als Nebeneffekt von Genoziden ganze Wissenstraditionen ausgerottet werden. In Bezug auf FKF ist dabei insbesondere auch relevant, inwiefern Frieden eine Form epistemischer Unterdrückung sein kann. Dies passiert etwa durch autokratische Regime, welche durch strikte Regularien und hohe Präsenz von Staatsgewalten ein augenscheinlich friedliches Umfeld schaffen, dabei aber keinerlei Dissens erlauben. Auch liberale Formen des Peacebuilding tendieren dazu, durch den Import von immer gleichen Wissenskonstruktionen über Frieden und Demokratie, lokale Wissen und Wege zum Frieden zu unterdrücken. In postkolonialen Staaten geht dies zudem auf Kosten von konstruktivem gesellschaftlichen Wandel, welcher zugunsten von oberflächlichem Frieden unterdrückt wird; dabei wird primär auf epistemologische Formen der Besetzung und Unterdrückung zurückgegriffen.

Im Schlusskapitel wird daher betrachtet, wie solchen Strukturen umfassender entgegengearbeitet werden kann, um Wissen über und für den Frieden zu stärken. Dazu liegt der Fokus zunächst auf dekolonialen Friedenskonzeptionen. Hier gibt es eine Vielzahl an Zugängen, die Frieden als prozessual und im Wandel, emphatisch und verkörpert oder iterativ und dialogisch begreifen. Hinzu kommen grundlegende Veränderungen des Friedensbegriffs, die etwa die Dichotomie zwischen Frieden und Konflikt als Gegensatzpaar auflösen oder Frieden als etwas begreifen, was bereits in der Welt ist und daher nicht neu geschaffen werden muss. Durch die Wahrnehmung vielfältiger Friedenskonzeptionen wird zum einem dem hegemonialen Anspruch einer europäischen Wissenstradition entgegengewirkt und zum anderen Raum gegeben, auf individuelle Herausforderungen fokussiert und weniger gewaltsam zu reagieren. Dies ist auch der Kern des zweiten diskutierten Ansatzes der Pluriversalität. Hierbei handelt es sich um einen Begriff der dekolonialen Theorie, welcher die gleichzeitige Existenz verschiedener Epistemologien und Wissen beschreibt, ohne dass hegemoniale Tendenzen entstehen. Stattdessen existieren die Wissenskontexte nicht nur gleichzeitig, sondern auch in Wertschätzung und im

Austausch miteinander. Ein solcher Ansatz wäre nicht nur ein effektiver Weg gegen epistemische Unterdrückung vorzugehen, sondern auch eine Bereicherung wissenschaftlicher Diskurse.
All dies führt zu dem Schluss, dass die FKF eine dekoloniale Epistemologie benötigt. Theorie und die von ihr informierte Praxis sind Teil hegemonialer Praktiken und das Wissen des Feldes ist oftmals stark eurozentristisch geprägt. Gleichzeitig ist die FKF historisch stark in herrschaftskritischen Forschungsansätzen und Bewegungen verortet und dadurch prädestiniert, eine stärkere Präsenz dekolonialer Epistemologien voranzutreiben. Dadurch wird mittelbar auch das Ziel, Wissen für und über den Frieden zu schaffen, unterstützt. Die vorliegende Arbeit unternimmt einen Schritt in eben diese Richtung. Zu diesem Zweck besteht sie neben der eben beschriebenen Rahmung aus drei individuellen Leistungen, die den Themenkomplex Wissen und Frieden behandeln.

Der erste Artikel trägt den Titel „Finding Peace in a Thought Experiment? Eidetic Variations on Knowledge Ownership as a Perspective in Peace Education" und unternimmt eine Systematisierung verschiedener Formen von Eigentum von Wissen als Eigentum von einem, von manchen und von allen. Diese drei Ebenen werden mit der Methode einer eidetischen Variation untersucht, um zu identifizieren, inwiefern sich die drei Formen von Eigentum auf gesellschaftliche, epistemische Machtdynamiken auswirken. Die Analyse findet anhand der Kategorien des Wissens, des Wissenden und der Institutionalisierung von Wissen statt. Zudem wird Friedensbildung und antikolonial libertäre Pädagogik als Gegenelement zu hegemonialen Wissenstendenzen betrachtet. Die Analyse findet dabei sowohl auf der abstrakten Ebene des Gedankenexperiments als auch auf der konkreten Ebene empirischer Beispiele statt. Dabei wird deutlich, wie diskriminierende und marginalisierende Elemente Raum in jeder Variation finden, jedoch prägen sie sich unterschiedlich aus.
Eine Gesellschaft, in welcher Wissen das Eigentum einzelner ist, tendiert dazu eine große Bandbreite an Wissen zu ermöglichen, kommodifiziert dieses jedoch wahrscheinlich und hat daher einen restriktiven Zugang zu Bildung. Dies bedeutet, dass insbesondere finanziell marginalisierte Personen, nur schwer Zugang bekommen. Dies wird verstärkt durch den wahrscheinlichen Mangel an Wissensinstitutionen und deren abermals restriktiven Zugang. Für jene, welche sich Bildung leisten können, wird hingegen ein großes Angebot zur Verfügung stehen. Dem kann durch Bildungsinitiativen begegnet werden und indem Friedensbildung sich auf die Forderung von Gemeinschaft und Solidarität fokussiert.
Wenn Wissen manchen gehört, wie etwa einer bestimmten Gruppe, so kann dies innerhalb der Gruppe sowohl hierarchische als auch egalitäre Formen annehmen. In jedem Fall ist eine klare Abgrenzung zur restlichen Gesellschaft, vor der Wissen geschützt wird, wahrscheinlich. Gruppenmitglieder können Wissende werden und werden als solche anerkannt, während Außenseiter*innen keinen Zugang erhalten. Daher wird auch die Bildung durch die Gruppe

übernommen und in diesem Kontext institutionalisiert. Abweichungen werden potenziell sanktioniert. Sollte die Gruppe bzw. das Gruppenwissen marginalisiert sein, bietet diese Struktur eine hervorragende Basis für Widerstand. Friedenspädagogik könnte in diesem Kontext den Fokus auf Möglichkeiten zum Austausch und zur Kollaboration zwischen der Gruppe und dem Umfeld legen.

Wenn Wissen allen gehört, sind die Hürden, Wissen zu erhalten, sehr gering. Jede*r kann sich Wissen zu eigen machen und Wissensinstitutionen sind entsprechend leicht zugänglich. Dieser hohe Grad der Institutionalisierung von Wissen führt aber wahrscheinlich auch zu einer starken Homogenisierung des Wissens. Wissen, welches nicht Teil des institutionalisierten Kanons ist, könnte dabei leicht marginalisiert werden. Hier gilt es also, die vorgegebenen Denkstrukturen zu entlernen, um so Raum für diverseres Wissen zu schaffen. Die Friedensbildung kann hier unterstützen, indem sie die Wertschätzung sowie den Umgang mit Vielfalt fördert.

Die Systematisierung macht also deutlich, wie verschiedene Wisseneigentümerschaften verschiedene Machtstrukturen zur Folge haben. Die Dynamiken sind dabei klar entlang von Eigentum als zentraler Komponente strukturiert, die Auswirkungen hingegen stehen in direktem Verhältnis zu den Vorurteilen und marginalisierenden Strukturen einer Gesellschaft. Die Friedensbildung ist hier eine wichtige Ressource, um Diskriminierung entgegenzuwirken und emanzipierten Umgang mit Wissen und Epistemologien zu fördern. Daraus entsteht eine besondere Verantwortung für Forschende und Lehrende, Wissen in diesem Sinne zu fördern.

Im zweiten Artikel mit dem Titel „Epistemological Anarchism against Epistemic Violence? A Rereading of Paul Feyerabend towards the Decolonisation of Academic Knowledge Production" steht das Konzept der Epistemischen Gewalt im Zentrum. In einer vergleichenden Betrachtung wird eine dekoloniale Konzeption epistemischer Gewalt mit Paul Feyerabends Schriften verglichen. Feyerabend kreiert seinen epistemologischen Anarchismus als eine Kritik des Wissenschaftsbetriebs und macht gleichzeitig, wenn auch recht offen formulierte, Vorschläge für eine methodische wie epistemologische Weiterentwicklung der Wissenschaft. Im Vergleich wird deutlich, dass beide Ansätze ähnliche Aspekte thematisieren und die Kritiken relevantes Potenzial für Austausch haben. Beide Seiten thematisieren den Mythos der Universität als einer angeblich unfehlbaren, vernunftbasierten Institution mit signifikantem gesellschaftlichen Status, die jedoch diesem Bild de facto nicht gerecht wird. Während Feyerabend wissenschaftlich unsaubere Praktiken und Herrschaftshörigkeit kritisiert, fokussiert sich die dekoloniale Kritik auf hegemoniale Praktiken und limitiertes, eurozentristisches Wissen. Feyerabend versteht weiterhin die gesellschaftliche Rolle der Universitäten als demokratiegefährdend, aufgrund ihres gesellschaftlichen Status und durch die hegemoniale Stellung, die akademisches Wissen gegenüber anderen Wissen einnimmt. Stattdessen schlägt er mit dem demokratischen Relativismus eine Vielheit von Wissen vor, die gleichzeitig auch als Ausgangspunkt für

Moralurteile fungieren. Abermals ist eine ähnliche Perspektive in der dekolonialen Theorie zu finden. Pluriverale und vielfältige Wissen sind eine grundlegende Idee dekolonialen Denkens und zielen auf die Gleichzeitigkeit verschiedener Epistemologien ab. Dabei steht insbesondere auch die lokale Situiertheit von Wissen im Vordergrund. Schließlich kritisiert Feyerabend noch die methodologischen Mängel akademischer Forschung und schlägt vor, alternative und kreative Formen der Wissensproduktion zu integrieren, jeweils nach der Maßgabe, was für das konkrete Projekt Sinn ergibt. Abermals finden sich ähnliche Gedankengänge in dekolonialen Ansätzen, wo insbesondere Wissensformen und Forschungsmethoden, wie auch -ergebnisse, die nicht textbasiert sind, eine zentrale Rolle spielen.
Es wird deutlich, inwiefern Feyerabends epistemologischer Anarchismus und dekoloniale Theorien zu Wissen und Wissenschaft zueinander sprechen. Zwar stehen sie in unterschiedlichen Wissenstraditionen, jedoch sehen sie ähnliche Probleme des akademischen Systems und schlagen ähnliche oder anschlussfähige Lösungen vor. Dies ist insofern relevant, als es eine externe und interne Kritik der Universität erlaubt, die so an Legitimierung und an Perspektive gewinnt. Eine solch umfassende Perspektive ist im Sinne einer kritischen Forschung, die sich der Kritik an den eigenen Institutionen als Strukturen epistemischer Gewalt stellt.

Der dritte Artikel trägt den Titel „Redefining a Global Cosmopolitanism. An Attempt towards Openness as a central Concept in Postcolonial Conflict Resolution". Der Anfangspunkt ist dabei die Frage, ob Kosmopolitismus als Konzept ausgedient hat. Dazu werden die drei in der Literatur einschlägigen Kritikpunkte betrachtet und mit verschiedenen Konzeptionen von Kosmopolitismus kontrastiert. Zunächst existiert die Kritik, dass Kosmopolitismus ein eurozentristisches Konzept ist. Hier ist anzumerken, dass zwar der Name oftmals in den Kontext einer europäischen Ideengeschichte gestellt wird, ähnliche Ideen aber auch in anderen und insbesondere auch in präkolonialen Wissenstraditionen existieren. Die kosmopolitische Idee ist also keinesfalls ausschließlich eine europäische. Eine weitere Kritik versteht Kosmopolitismus als ein elitäres Konzept. Dies ist sicherlich gerechtfertigt für eine bestimmte Interpretation von Kosmopolitismus, die auf lifestyle cosmopolitanism genannt wird und einen internationalen, konsumorientierten Lebensstil beschreibt. Es gibt jedoch auch andere vernakulare und lokale Kosmopolitismen, die offene Sinneshaltungen und solche, die Vielfalt gegenüber positiv eingestellt sind, beschreiben, statt die Reisegewohnheiten einer Oberschicht. Schließlich besteht die Kritik, dass Kosmopolitismus ein hegemoniales Konzept ist. Diese Kritik existiert insbesondere im Kontext des liberalen Friedens und geht zurück auf die Nutzung des Konzeptes als Legitimierungsgrund für internationale Interventionen, ähnlich, wie es bereits zur Kolonialzeit gängig war. Die Kritik der Nutzung von Kosmopolitismus in diesem Sinne ist gerechtfertigt, richtet sich jedoch gegen einen konzeptionellen Missbrauch, nicht gegen das Konzept an sich. Dahingehend zeigen insbesondere post- und dekoloniale Konzeptionen von Kosmopolitismus

inwiefern die Idee eben auch eine subversive Interpretation zulässt und als pluriversaler Ansatz tragfähig ist.
Es wird also deutlich, inwiefern Kosmopolitismus als ein sehr breites Konzept Raum für unterschiedliche Interpretationen bietet und auch missbräuchliche zulässt. Gleichzeitig ist es jedoch ein relevanter Ansatz, da er durch seine Verbreitung vielfältig anschlussfähig ist. Dazu bedarf es jedoch einer offenen Konzeption mit viel Raum für lokale Aneignung.
Dies ist insbesondere für die Praxis wichtig. Im Bereich der Konfliktbearbeitung etwa folgt ein signifikanter Teil der internationalen Einsatzkräfte einer elitären kosmopolitischen Denkweise. Dies hat konkrete Konsequenzen für die internationale Konfliktbearbeitung. Es kommt zu epistemischer Gewalt, Unterdrückungspraktiken und Hierarchien zwischen lokalen und internationalen Kräften. Durch formalisierte Zugänge werden lokale Besonderheiten ignoriert und der Erfolg der Projekte sinkt. Hier könnte ein neues Mindset eines offenen Kosmopolitismus nicht nur die Gewalttätigkeit internationaler Konfliktbearbeitung minimieren, sondern auch der Effektivität ihrer Arbeit einen Vorschub leisten.

Neben den Leistungen der drei Einzelbeiträgen bringt sich die Dissertationsschrift als Ganzes daher in aktuelle Debatten der FKF und anderer Disziplinen, die zu Konflikt und Frieden arbeiten, ein. Sie schließt an das, sich noch in seinen Anfängen befindliche, Projekt der Dekolonialisierung der FKF an und erweitert dieses um eine Perspektive auf Wissen über und für den Frieden. Damit steht das Projekt in der Tradition kritisch-normativer Friedensforschung und zieht gleichzeitig Verbindungen zu anderen Fachdiskursen, die in der FKF noch stark unterrepräsentiert sind. Die verschiedenen Dimensionen epistemischer Unterdrückung, welche die Arbeit betrachtet, werden zu diesem Zweck stets mit Formen epistemischen Widerstandes und Unterstützung von Friedenswissen kontrastiert. Als Lösungsansatz werden pluriverse Denkansätze vorgeschlagen, die diverse Epistemologien in einen Austausch treten lassen. Dieser Ansatz ist ein wichtiger Schritt für die Zukunft der FKF als kritischer Disziplin mit ethisch fundierter und international relevanter Forschung.

Dissertation

1. Knowledges of Peace

This dissertation addresses the connection between knowledge and peace on the level of knowledge of peace but even more concerning knowledge for peace. The topic was conceived due to an initial irritation with the omnipresence of hegemonic power dynamics within education and knowledge production and the somewhat mirrored perspective of the use of knowledge as a powerful measure in conflict. Both of those phenomena beg the question of whether there is a way to connect knowledge not only to conflict and violence but also to peace.

At the same time, knowledge is surprisingly absent from Peace and Conflict Studies, particularly as an explicit mention. While there are some scholars working on the connection between knowledge and violence (Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostić 2017; Brunner 2020), knowledge and peace remain mostly absent.

I would hence like to explore the topic further over the course of this dissertation by addressing several dimensions of the connection between knowledge and peace from the perspective of a decolonial critique. With this aim, I will first establish further our knowledge on peace and determine how knowledge as a topic is present in Peace and Conflict Studies. From there, I will address three different dimensions of power dynamics in relation to knowledge. These dimensions are access to knowledge and how its control can be instrumentalised, the production of knowledge and how discriminatory structures exist within it and finally the oppression of knowledge and epistemic violence. Each chapter not only provides an overview of the types of violence that happen within these dimensions of knowledge but also emphasises critique and resistance. This approach is in line not only with the aim of the dissertation to centre knowledge for peace but also with the positioning of Peace and Conflict Studies as a normative and involved field of research. The concluding chapter will thus focus on knowledges as and for resistance and adopt largely a decolonial and pluriversal perspective on peace.

The framework paper is followed by the three contributions, which are addressed and connected with each other and the framework throughout. They all deal with the matter of epistemic oppression and how to oppose it on different levels. Over the course of this research, it became clear that epistemic oppression is omnipresent in the topic of concern in Peace and Conflict Studies and should thus also be a core topic of debate within the field. Hence, my dissertation not only contributes several individual perspectives of epistemic oppression but also, as a whole, emphasises the importance of further including an epistemic perspective in Peace and Conflict Studies and advances the normalisation of decolonial perspectives within the field. I argue that Peace and Conflict Studies constitute a field that is ideally placed to work towards this normalisation as they are in the unique position of a tradition of critical perspectives while also

informing a practice that, more often than not, causes harm. The field thus has the capability as well as the responsibility to become a forerunner in this endeavour.

1.1. Academic Perspectives on Peace

For a field of studies that carries the word "peace" in its name, Peace and Conflict Studies have an astonishingly vague conception of what peace actually is. This is of course not an oversight but speaks to the conceptional complexity of the term. There is no lack of attempts to narrow down the concept, of course. Despite the fact that a significant majority of peace and conflict researchers focus on conflict, not on peace (Bright and Gledhill 2018; Gittings 2016, p. 24), the conceptional struggle around the word peace is a core debate in the field.

One frequently used definition of peace was established by Johan Galtung, one of the founding figures of Peace and Conflict Studies as an academic field. He distinguished between negative and positive peace. Negative peace is typically easy to define and is close to the answer that someone who is spontaneously asked to give a definition might provide. Negative peace is the absence of war, of suffering, of oppression and so on. It is the definition of peace through the negation of what is considered its opposite. It is also a good illustration of the difficulty involved in finding a definition of peace because there is often a distinct lack of such a definition beyond the notion of what peace is not. However, of course, a mere absence of war, of fearing being hurt in armed conflict, is not the equivalent of a peaceful life. To account for that, positive peace describes a more active version of peace. It is about having needs fulfilled, feeling safe and, importantly, being able to make active life choices and realise one's potential. Hence, Galtung's differentiation is one of a life without physical violence and one of a life of predominantly positive experience and self-actualisation (Galtung 1969, pp. 183–186).

Since then, a number of notions of peace have been developed, often building on Galtung's groundwork, "such as 'durable', 'eternal', 'perpetual', 'lasting', 'permanent', 'enduring', 'stable', and 'sustainable'" (Kulnazarova 2019, p. 11). All those concepts have in common an understanding that, for lasting peace, it is necessary for peace to be much more than a glorified ceasefire. Most contemporary notions of peace also stand in a tradition in which they try to work through the legacy of the liberal peace paradigm that has dominated theory and practice since the 1990s and created what is now understood to be a hegemonic, one-size-fits-all approach to building peace (Chandler 2010; Richmond and Mac Ginty 2015; Rodriguez Iglesias 2020, pp. 205–206; Rusche 2022).

Of course, there are many understandings of peace outside Peace and Conflict Studies. Other disciplines, like Philosophy and Political Science, have long since worked with different versions and have rich traditions and ongoing debates on how to conceptualise peace. Gittings identified four large, traditional trajectories of approaches to peace in European academia. Two of them, the realist approach that he saw in the tradition of Thucydides and Machiavelli and the just war theory

in the tradition of St Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, concentrate more on war and its necessity of righteousness. The other two focus on peace. He identified a humanist tradition of peace thinking that was continued through the Enlightenment towards peace societies that follow such a humanist ideal. Finally, he situated the tradition of pacifism in Christian philosophy (Gittings 2016, pp. 25–26).

Pacifist philosophy as a Christian tradition is based on a radical commitment to a non-violent life even at the cost of not being able to prevent harm or injustice. It thus primarily works through the Christian belief in an afterlife and the accordingly limited importance of this worldly one. Without this religious basis, it is extremely difficult to justify morally a complete abstinence from violence or even to make the choice that is morally likely to be made. An understanding of peace as absolutely non-violent behaviour thus has limited viability under most circumstances (Renegger 2016, pp. 45–48).

Within International Relations and Political Science, the more prominent approach to peace is to consider the institutionalisation of peace or peace governance that focusses on the political and legal structures that might help to establish and preserve peace. Nevertheless, this approach typically involves little conceptualisation of peace, instead focussing more on the structural dimensions of creating and maintaining it (Chandler 2016; Renegger 2016, pp. 48–49). Similarly, other disciplines dealing with peace, such as Geography (Megoran et al. 2016) and Sociology (Bramsen 2024), tend to take a largely empirical approach, concentrating on peace processes and practices rather than on the concept of peace itself, making it apparent that a significant amount of research across the disciplines is more directed towards peace and its realisation than it is on peace as a concept.

Recent developments across the disciplines focus on more holistic notions of peace and try to challenge the dominant paradigms. They include approaches like relational peace, which focusses on peace through human relationships (Söderström et al. 2021), as well as concepts that extend beyond a merely human approach (Courtheyn 2018). Such a perspective is particularly prevalent in conceptions of ecological peace (Golden 2016; Hsiao and Le Billon 2021) and notions of posthuman peace as they are emphasised within Anthropocene research (Simangan 2022; Torrent 2021). However, these approaches tend to use the same paradigms as a framework which they seek to overcome and have already been criticised for their overly Eurocentric perspective (Mathews 2020). It hence remains questionable how far they propose real alternatives to the canon.

1.2. Tracing Origins of Peaces beyond Academia

I would now like to turn my focus to notions of peace that were not developed as part of modern disciplinary academia. This is not to say that they are not discussed in an academic context nowadays. In fact, many of the approaches presented here are debated in academia, and the

vantage points vary regionally (Tripathi and Roepstorff 2020). However, academia is not necessarily their origin. Beyond academia, European notions of peace are strongly informed by the already-mentioned Christian and humanist belief systems and the strong moral codes that accompany them. Additionally, a radical left movement for peace emerged from socialist and international thought (Young 2013, pp. 159–160). From those movements emerged different versions of peace and anti-war movements and sentiments that gained traction in the aftermath of the many wars fought over the course of the twentieth century. They tended to share humanist and cosmopolitan ideals and thus understood peace as a humanitarian act and as a matter of solidarity, conscience and rightful coexistence. Nevertheless, they also worked predominantly with negative peace as most of them were first and foremost anti-war movements (Barash and Webel 2022, pp. 272–295).

Particularly when moving beyond the Eurocentric history of thought, the notion of peace becomes significantly diversified. With the many conceptions of peace that stem from a European tradition of thought, there is, as seen above, still a certain consensus on what peace entails and can look like. However, when leaving behind this perspective, particularly the modern view that has been so dominant since the Enlightenment, the perspective on what peace can mean becomes much wider, showing how the understanding of peace is rooted and localised. This understanding is centred academically by decolonial activist scholars who emphasize the pluriversality of peace and its situatedness. They also question assumptions that are typically taken for granted from a Eurocentric perspective and position decolonial notions of peace actively against the omnipresence of the liberal peace legacy and the connected power dynamics (Fontan 2012; Rodriguez Iglesias 2020, pp. 203–205; Te Maihāroa et al. 2022b).

Galtung, in an effort to find a comparative perspective on different types of peace, claimed that peace tends to become more of a topic of the individual and to adopt an inward focus in many Asian traditions, whereas Eurocentric peace tends to be focussed on interaction and international cooperation, with a geographical continuum of those two extremes reaching across the two continents (Galtung 1981; Kulnazarova 2019, p. 7). This supposed (East) Asian counterpart to European perspectives on peace can, for example, be found in Buddhist traditions. Here, peace is closely associated with calm and harmony and represents more a state of mind than a political status. Violence is considered “an ethical lapse” (Tsomo 2014, p. 233), and the non-existence of a detached self leads to a less prominent self-fixation or lack of egotism. This is replaced with a responsibility to prevent harm for all living beings as part of a connected existence (Tsomo 2014, pp. 229–235; Yeh 2006). Confucianism, conversely, associates peace with harmony but also with tianxia (Yu 2014, pp. 244–245), a historic Chinese concept that can at the same time be understood as a form of cosmopolitan thought (Merkle 2024c, p. 7; Rofel 2018, pp. 517–518). This already hints that Confucianism in fact includes a very political dimension that emphasises working towards peace by understanding the complexity of reality, in which multiple things can

be true or right, depending on the position. Thus, peace is achieved by acknowledging everybody’s perspective (Yu 2014, pp. 255–258).

Muslim traditions of peace include aspects that are focussed on the inside as well as some focussed on the outside. Inner peace is again equated with harmony but also with surrender through faith. The next dimension is the social cohesion of the immediate surroundings and community and finally attentiveness and a solution-oriented approach to existing conflict. All the levels are linked through the notion of respect for oneself and the world around one as one creation and have been developed into a number of contemporary approaches to peace and its institutionalisation (Haneef 2014, pp. 124–129; Nursita and Sahide 2019).

We can view several concepts in a similar way. The Jewish Shalom is concerned with wholeness as an antithesis to inner struggle but also division in the world (Ellis 2014, p. 89). West African thought centres peace on a life fully realised and on connection to a community (Opoku 2014, pp. 417–419). Native perspectives from North America understand peace through its relation to nature and respect for its “diversity and interdependence” (Lauderdale 2014, p. 318; Walker 2022), whereas indigenous peaces from Aotearoa New Zealand concern a spiritual connection between war and peace and includes pacifist dimensions. Here such peaceful resistance is not in opposition to but a logical continuation of violent ones (Te Maihāroa et al. 2022a).

My intent here was to give an exemplary impression of the diversity of existing conceptions of peace. This list has already made it clear that, even though concepts of peace have common themes that tend to appear frequently, they also have a large diversity of focus points and interpretations. This diversity helps to ground an abstract concept, to give it meaning, and make it understandable in specific contexts. It also shows the necessity of further conceptualising peace and including more diverse conceptions of peace in academic research in general but more specifically in Peace and Conflict Studies. To this aim, it is also important not to be satisfied with the kinds of peaces that are accessible through academic publications, preferably in English, but reach beyond them towards local knowledges. An issue here remains why, albeit widely known, many of the perspectives on peace addressed here, along with many others that could not be named, are yet to enter mainstream research and teaching in Peace and Conflict Studies (Devere et al. 2022, pp. 188–189; Millar 2023; Ziai et al. 2020).

1.3. The Concept of Peace in Peace Education

Having established some of the knowledge that we have on peace, let us now move to the question of how knowledge is relevant to peace. There is surprisingly little literature on this topic within research on peace and conflict. The research that exists is largely centred on how we can create mindsets of peace through education. Peace pedagogy and education are a significant part of Peace and Conflict Studies, with a tradition dating back to its beginnings (Lum 2013). Founding figures of the field, like Betty Reardon, have put significant emphasis on the educational and

pedagogical dimensions of peace, and peace education is still a central part of Peace and Conflict Studies globally.

Reardon herself identified seven central capacities of peace making through peace education: “reflection, responsibility, risk, reconciliation, recovery, reconstruction, and reverence” (Reardon 2021 (1988), p. 73). Reflection, the first of those, shows how peace education is not only about conveying knowledge about and towards peace but also involves dealing critically with knowledge and with what we think we know as part of the process of entering into peaceful interaction with others (Reardon 2013, pp. 1–2). Accordingly, peace pedagogues and educators use a range of tools and approaches. These include communal ways of schooling that emphasise group progress over individual success, empowerment towards active engagement in societal topics and taking on responsibilities, critical and hopeful thinking and understanding how truths are constructed and that lived realities are not inevitable (Shapiro 2010, pp. 183–189). They typically share the idea of education being meant to enable and foster both action and community while respecting diversity and diverse opinions (Gould 2013, pp. 59–60; Wright 2013).

At the same time, especially more critical approaches to peace education are concerned with the approach to knowledge that is taken. This includes sensibility for the cosmology and social context of a peace education project and thus taking a closer look at the potential hegemonies that might be reproduced depending on who teaches what to whom and in which context. This is particularly important when peace educators from the global North take on projects in the global South to avoid creating colonial dynamics (Wessells 2013, pp. 89–94). On a similar note, they urge scrutiny of the understanding of peace that is often considered consensual in peace education. Peace is typically positively connotated and understood as a dichotomous concept, which represents a Eurocentric understanding of the term, failing to pay tribute to the diversity of the existing knowledges of peace discussed previously and hence potentially even enforcing the existing power dynamics (Alcoff 2017; Zembylas and Bekerman 2017, pp. 147–149). Instead, a critical perspective needs to be open to the local context, leave the discursive power over concepts with the participants and take their life experience seriously. Instead of bringing in pre-set syllabi, the goal is to provide the tools for participants to reach their own critical perspective in their own context (Zembylas and Bekerman 2017, pp. 154–156).

Therefore, while education towards peace is rather prominent, it has also become apparent that it is predominantly focussed on peaceful mindsets and didactical approaches to encouraging peaceful behaviour. Its interest in peace and knowledge is hence directed towards a specific goal, not a general analysis of the connection between the two. Unfortunately, beyond peace education, the connection between knowledge and peace is even less of a topic. This is somewhat surprising to me as structural dimensions of conflict and violence are very much a traditional and contemporary topic in Peace and Conflict Studies, yet the structural dimension of knowledge for peace (and its potential for conflict) is not. The categorisation of violence as existing not only in

a direct physical form but also as structural and cultural violence is another major contribution by Galtung to Peace and Conflict Studies. As structural violence, he described social structures which prevent individuals from fulfilling their potential, discriminate against them and in many other ways treat them as unequal to other people. Whereas cultural violence means the values and belief systems within a society that legitimise structural violence by interpreting it as appropriate or justified, thus providing the knowledge system for structural violence to work and be perceived as coherent (Galtung 1969, 1990). Claudia Brunner demonstrated that epistemic dimensions are part of these two notions of violence and that Galtung's theories might be of relevance to the topic despite his increasing tendency to adopt essentialist notions of culture (Brunner 2020, pp. 152–185). However, a similar conception does not exist for epistemic dimensions of peace.

1.4. Contributions: Knowledge and Peace

It seems only consequential to include knowledge as an explicit category in this and many other thought processes on structural forms of oppression, violence and conflict. I would argue that it is very much prevalent implicitly. Nevertheless, for some reason, the explicit dimension has largely been left uncovered. There are, of course, exceptions. Brunner connected epistemic violence and the surrounding debates to Peace and Conflict Studies and on a similar note attested to the lack of attention paid to knowledge within the field, albeit concerning violence more than peace (Brunner 2020, p. 80). Berit Bliesemann de Guevara and Roland Kostić examined knowledge production on, again, conflicts and interventions in neoliberal societies (Bliesemann de Guevara and Kostić 2017, 2019). While there is a certain tradition within German Peace and Conflict Studies to develop the concept of a logic of peace (Birckenbach 2023), this has received little attention recently and has never gained traction internationally. Jessica Senehi interestingly stated that "peace research seeks to unpack and counter the relationship among power, identity, and knowledge" (Senehi 2020, p. 48). However, even here, no examples of this claim were mentioned, underscoring the assumption that knowledge in Peace and Conflict Studies, and knowledge of and for peace in particular, is first and foremost addressed implicitly and in the margins (Exo 2023).

This puzzling observation is where I would like to situate this dissertation, which approaches the connection of Peace and Conflict Studies with knowledge from several perspectives but with a shared incentive: to advocate for a stronger and more explicit focus in the field on the relevant role that knowledge plays in Peace and Conflict Studies and more specifically in the even less regarded dimension of peace. To fill this gap, I argue, Peace and Conflict Studies need to stop relying on implicit mentions and use of research from other areas. Instead, research on knowledge specifically for matters of peace, conflict and violence needs to be advanced to do justice to the unique perspective of the field as an area of study in its own right.

With this project, I contribute by addressing the topic from three different perspectives in three different papers and highlighting their connection to each other and to the just-displayed research perspective through this framework. Accordingly, I address several dimensions of knowledge that are prevalent across the three papers that form the core of this dissertation and consider how they intersect with Peace and Conflict Studies. The dimensions that I focus on are the matters of access to knowledge, production of knowledge and finally oppression of knowledge. The three chapters will highlight the existing research on each dimension, elaborate on my contribution to the topic and address the inherent violence as well as some levels of potential for peace within them. The final chapter then takes a step towards peace with a perspective on pluriversal knowledge, decolonial peaces and their potential for resistance.

Besides the overall narrative presented in this framework paper, the contribution of this dissertation lies in three separate academic papers that will be discussed in more detail in the following.

The first paper (Merkle 2024b) takes a closer look at the structural dimension of knowledge and power by creating variations of knowledge ownership, examining its connection to power over knowledge and hence identifying the potential for change and space for resistance. Resistance is thereby primarily addressed by means of education as a manner of establishing conscious and responsible behaviour, and the ability of peace education to achieve this is examined.

The second paper (Merkle 2023) dives deeper into the matter of epistemic violence as a form of structural discrimination and oppression in relation to knowledge. Here, the decolonial literature on epistemic violence enters into an exchange with Paul Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism. This connection allows for a more holistic critique of violence in knowledge production and again approaches peace through the idea of resistance against exclusive modes of knowledge production and a violent, Eurocentric academy.

The third paper (Merkle 2024c) then investigates cosmopolitanism on two levels. First, it addresses its potential as a set of values that can reduce violence in peacebuilding and conflict resolution and critiques the way in which the concept has been abused in this regard. Second, cosmopolitanism is used as an example to show the benefits of including non-Eurocentric knowledge in deliberations to create less violent structures of knowledge production but also to allow for more plural and complex debates.

As a theoretical contribution, this dissertation put strong emphasis on an approach of comparison and connection. All the papers explore different perspectives concerning their content and the approach to research different disciplines and schools, aiming to build connections between them. The first paper (Merkle 2024b) does so very explicitly by choosing Husserl's method of eidetic variation to study the dynamics of knowledge and power across different societal structures. It also introduces a debate that is traditionally situated within critical theory to an area of research that is more related to Peace and Conflict Studies by using peace processes as a case. The second

paper (Merkle 2023) compares and combines decolonial and epistemologically anarchist critiques of academic knowledge production. Finally, the third paper (Merkle 2024c) compares different notions of cosmopolitanism beyond the Eurocentric understanding and makes a connection to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This approach emphasises a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach to research, which is in line with Peace and Conflict Studies as an interdisciplinary field. As such, my research draws from various disciplines across social science and the humanities besides Peace and Conflict Studies, including International Relations, Philosophy, Sociology and Postcolonial Studies. It also allows for a holistic and multiperspectival approach to the topics of knowledge and peace in the spirit of pluriversality.

I also situate my research within decolonial theory to a certain degree. By that, I mean that I understand my standpoint to be one that considers the decolonial perspective as the one that informs my research. I also consider it a goal of my research to contribute to decolonisation. At the same time, a project like a dissertation needs to be too firmly situated within Eurocentric academic structures to be truly decolonial in nature (Rai and Campion 2022). This includes the theoretical traditions that I refer to but also the structural process of writing a single-author publication with the goal of receiving formal recognition from academia. Additionally, my being a white European woman means that, by putting my perspective front and centre, the same does not happen for a person from a postcolonial context. I hence cannot claim this project to be inherently decolonial. I understand it instead to be informed by decolonial theory and produced in a spirit of allyship with decolonial writers. I take a decolonial perspective in my papers in different ways. The first paper (Merkle 2024b) deals with resistance to oppression and focusses on decolonial perspectives, like Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed. It considers strategies to oppose powers of coloniality. The second paper (Merkle 2023) explicitly adopts a decolonial perspective on epistemic violence and debates how epistemological anarchism can create a dimension of allyship from within academia. The third paper (Merkle 2024c) works towards decolonisation of the peacebuilding industry by highlighting modes of colonial powers within and addressing potential shifts towards more decolonial mindsets. It also implements the approach of working with plural knowledges beyond the Eurocentric canon by studying different notions of cosmopolitanism across time and culture.

While there is much more to explore, particularly when it comes to the empirical consequences and practical application of the addressed issues, this dissertation is limited to studying the connection between peace and knowledge from a decolonial standpoint. It is therefore unable to track in depth the different forms that epistemic oppression can take, especially beyond the realm of academia, and cannot account for other critical approaches to the topic. The final parts of this thesis address matters of decolonial peaces and pluriversal knowledge as they are currently being developed by decolonial scholars. These concepts can only be addressed in brief and cannot be

situated within the whole complexity that coloniality as a research paradigm provides through the limitation set for this thesis in focussing on knowledge.

In this way, though not being an entirely decolonial project, decoloniality is very much a theoretical lens of this dissertation and its goals are centred in the included research. It is to be understood as a contribution at the intersection of Peace and Conflict Studies and decoloniality and as such advances the further inclusion of the decolonial perspective in the mainstream canon of Peace and Conflict Studies, particularly when it comes to epistemic dimensions. To this aim, the next chapter will start by addressing the accessibility of knowledge and the control that comes with knowledge possession but also the emancipatory potential that access to knowledge can have.

2. Access to Knowledge

Access to knowledge is a very important topic in conflicts and for peace. Typically, there will be conflicting narratives between conflicting parties that tell different and often mutually exclusive versions of what has happened and who they are. This chapter will consider different types of knowledges and how they can be used as a means of control by limiting access and thereby the ability to make one's own reflections and assessments. My contribution is this regard lies in a systematisation of types of knowledge ownership and an account of peace education as a measure of resistance.

2.1. Collective Narratives

Social psychologists have thoroughly researched the role that collective narratives play in groups. This starts at the level of the individual. Individual identity is formed and develops in relation to other individuals and the groups around them. This includes processes of imitation and distinction as well as relational processes with narratives that give meaning and allow a backdrop for sense making and interpretation of oneself and one's surroundings. Individuals thereby make choices between different narratives and accept or deny the implications that accompany them, sometimes taking on aspects from different narratives and combining them. Through this process, they develop a sense of who they are in relation to the world around them (Hammack 2011, pp. 313–314).

At the level of the group, these narratives then allow the construction of groups through the experience of shared meaning and perspectives in a continuous process. This constant renegotiation inside the group happens at the same time as a process of positioning the group within the larger context of its surroundings and in relation to other groups and individuals. Through identification with the group and the narratives, memories and truths that come with that, group members create coherence within themselves and within the group. Strong identification with the group leads to high dependency and investment in the group, which then again creates a need to justify why one identifies with this particular group and why it is a better choice than the alternatives (Bliuc and Chidley 2022, pp. 2–3; Spears 2011). At the same time, collective narratives typically have rather clear sets of norms and values that can then inspire collective action and might aid a process of continuously stronger distinction from out groups (Bliuc and Chidley 2022, pp. 5–6). While there are also unifying narratives with cosmopolitan ideals (Merkle 2024c), the ones that are more relevant to Peace and Conflict Studies are often the ones that create opposing groups that represent mutually exclusive narratives and might become further polarised. Their moral values also align with the group norms rather than sending a larger unifying message (Bliuc and Chidley 2022, pp. 8–9). This can also lead to othering. The concept of the other was first established by Simone De Beauvoir through references to Hegel's master–slave dialectic,

which includes both a psychological and a political notion of the distinction of self and other (Beauvoir 1956, pp. 15–21). Beauvoir and later writers from primarily postcolonial and feminist traditions took on the power dimension that comes with such a distinction. For the process behind that, the term othering was coined to describe the action through which such division is created, and with which hierarchies are introduced depending on various categories, such as gender or race (Brons 2015, pp. 69–70; Hall 2018; Said 1977; Spivak 1988; Teo 2008).

Group members thus reaffirm their choice and group identity by asserting the superiority of their group and by constructing the other as an out group that is considered inferior in some way and from which a distinction is thus necessary (Lüders et al. 2016). Depending on the context and the extent to which the out group members constitute themselves as a group, this may lead to oppression or violent conflict (Chowdhury et al. 2016).

While oppression, particularly oppression of knowledge, will be further debated in chapter four, I will now take a quick look at oppression through knowledge, namely through the creation of truths through dominant narratives. If a collective narrative is supported by an in group that also forms a significant majority or in other ways powerful group, this can lead to corresponding cultural norms creating a system of oppression against the out group. It then becomes the choice of the dominant group if other narratives are allowed to some extent and considering how the members of the belonging groups are treated. This is a common occurrence in, for example, a nationalist or patriarchal context in which group identity is not a mere choice but decided by markers of distinction, leading to sets of values that discriminate against the respective out groups that have no chance to escape their marginalisation but through a shift of norms. In doing so, the existing conflict might also turn physically violent or erupt in other ways when faced with resistance, leading us back to our second option (Federman 2016, p. 155; Lüders et al. 2016, pp. 41–42).

Violent conflict is often fuelled by conflicting narratives and group identities. Narratives hold immense persuasive power (Braddock and Horgan 2016). Besides values and norms, this includes competing interpretations of experiences, truths and memories, often leading to rival reports of the same events and contexts. Such conflicting stories are a major hampering factor in conflict resolution as they require the conflicting parties to assess critically and even change their belief systems, to which both group and individual identity are tied. To counteract such endeavours, groups might even become less and less accepting of the narrative diversity within their group (Garagozov and Gadirova 2019, pp. 449–450; Lüders et al. 2016, pp. 40–41). This shows the extensive power that lies in collective narratives, particularly in times of conflict. Furthermore, considering that it is already difficult to be open to other narratives when confronted with a conflict situation, it makes it clear what power lies with those who control the narrative. Dominant narratives in conflict tend to lead to a decline in willingness to work with the other side, making them an effective tool for those who have other goals than peace (Uluğ et al. 2021, p. 798).

To ensure control over fighters, they might be indoctrinated with specific narratives while also restricting their access to counter-narratives. This leads to limited options of reflection on their own position and influences relevant factors such as civilian targeting (Cantin 2021) or deserting (Oppenheim et al. 2015). Controlling access to narratives is thus an important strategic choice to ensure control over combatants and supporters.

One dominant narrative, particularly in conflicts that take place over a longer time span, is the narrative of victimhood of one's own group. This accompanies a perspective of the other side as being perpetrators. This black and white view leads to little acknowledgement of acts committed by one's own group and reduced willingness to reconcile with the opposing party (Uluğ et al. 2021, pp. 799–800; Wynne 2020). Traumatic experiences and group interpretations of events become part of this narrative and are repeated potentially for generations, producing intergenerational trauma but also fuel for conflicts and for the recruitment of new generations of fighters (Ehrmann and Millar 2021, pp. 590–591). How history is remembered and negotiated is thus of crucial relevance to conflict resolution and the building of peace and will be considered in more detail in the next part of this chapter.

2.2. Memory Politics and the Decolonial Debate

Research on collective memory and memory politics is a wide field. It relates strongly to bodies and space as places in which memory is inscribed. This accompanies the previous notion of generational trauma and its repercussions for following generations. This notion of memory unfortunately cannot be explored further here. What it speaks to, however, is that memory is not a retelling of supposed facts. It is a process of commemoration that is created in different ways and carved into places and people in more literal and more metaphorical senses. In constitutes conscious and unconscious re-narrations of events that serve a purpose. Memory is a constantly new creation to contextualise the present (Curti 2008, pp. 106–107).

By nature, memory is connected to dimensions of time and space. Communities and groups, including nation states, situate themselves through memory as a form of creation of roots and connection. Key events in conflicts are typically memorialised separately and differently by the involved parties, hence legitimizing their collective identity through the supposedly fact-based narration of events. Political actors can shape memory discourse in their favour or even establish officially recognised interpretations of memories that then shape the dominant narrative and vice versa (Du Bois 1993; Sierp and Wüstenberg 2015, pp. 321–322).

While it would be simplistic to assume one homogenous group memory, research instead has hinted at memory as being distributed and created within the group as a collaborative effort (Wertsch 2008, p. 121). Nevertheless, how those processes develop is not a matter of chance or supposed fact but instead a political process guided by the values and beliefs of the community at hand. It can also be stirred consciously in specific directions through the exercise of discursive

power, through choices for educational curricula, through the discrediting of sources and their advocates and through the introduction of alternative interpretations of events (Pető 2022, pp. 87–90). Dominant narratives of memory politics are an important political tool that can influence political actions or serve as their legitimisation. Crucially, this can also influence intergroup relations, particularly when it comes to differing narratives of memory around previous conflicts, and can thus severely shape political relations or even lead to new conflicts (Verovšek 2016, pp. 537–538).

In extreme cases, memory politics can become a conscious tool of manipulation and a means of post-truth politics. This includes revisionist takes on historic events or the forced success of distorting and misrepresenting interpretations of historic events. Post-truth memory politics are first and foremost a phenomenon in authoritarian discourses and illiberal politics, as Pető described for the Second World War commemoration in Hungary under the government of Orbán (Pető 2022, pp. 91–93).

However, also in less authoritarian contexts, hegemonic narratives of collective memory are present and increasingly contested. This becomes blatantly obvious when turning to decolonial theory. Eurocentric narratives of colonial times as well as of postcolonial encounters tend to be very prominent in public discourses and thus marginalise the memories of the victims of European colonialism and its successors (Go 2013). An example of this that has become rather conspicuous is the debate about the typical framing of Columbus's travels as the discovery of the Americas when they were in fact already known, just not to Europeans. Critical and particularly decolonial scholars have thus increasingly resorted to building a counter-narrative of Columbus's conquest of the Americas to represent the historical violence along with the violence perpetrated continuously through this hegemonic collective memory (Azarmandi 2016). Other, less publicly known, instances of memory politics in colonial continuity include the silencing of memories concerning colonial atrocities, as has been the case until recently with Canadian residential schools (Niezen 2016), or instances of reframing violent conflict as necessary, as not as bad or as resolved in the end (Kidman and O'Malley 2020).

The different versions of colonial memory politics share the goal of diminishing the guilt and responsibility of the perpetrators and singularly portray their perspective (Bhambra 2017). They also silence counter-memories and consequently delegitimise ongoing experiences of trauma and marginalisation. Decolonial activists and scholars have increasingly put a spotlight on this type of epistemic hegemony and produced counter-narratives and resistance within and outside what is canonically considered to be knowledge in the Eurocentric context (Basu and Jong 2016; Chakrabarty 2000, pp. 97–113; Schütz 2020). Like most of the decolonial project this is an ongoing endeavour, not to mention the similar dynamics that are occurring in other and intersectional contexts, such as due to patriarchal hegemony (Trinidad Galván 2016).

2.3. Ideology and Discourse

Of course, in other fields, knowledge and its relationship with power are far from a novelty. In particular, Critical Theory has made them a cornerstone of its writings. Robert Cox defined Critical Theory very well as an approach to research that questions the basic societal norms and power relations without taking anything for granted. It understands the present in the context of the past and potential futures as continuously changing and emphasises societal transformation as a normative goal (Cox 1981, pp. 129–130). The perspective they take, however, tends to be firmly situated within Eurocentric traditions of thought (Bhambra 2021).

Antonio Gramsci, in Marxist tradition, related knowledge strongly to class as he understood knowledge to be situated within concrete societal and historical contexts and assumed the domination of ruling class knowledge. The different experiences of people in a classist society further add to the differentiation and incompatibility of knowledges (Gramsci 1971, pp. 5–43; Salamini 1974, pp. 375–376). He further theorised Marx's understanding of ideology as a worldview that sustains bourgeois power in his concept of ideological hegemony. In this understanding, the existing ideological beliefs of the working class are instrumentalised by the ruling class against them to force them into supposed consent to uphold structures that oppose their own interests. People are thus taught beliefs that are then turned into a means of control to sustain hegemony, and they are led to believe that behaving differently will cause harm or act against their own values. Working for systemic change hence becomes an unfeasible option (Gramsci 1971, pp. 5–43; Langman 2015, p. 428).

The Frankfurt School addressed similar issues of control through ideology. They considered the increased administrative and commodified dimensions of contemporary mass society to be the core problem that prevented people from being able to have the necessary reasoning on how they are dominated. Socio-cultural structures lead to purposefully distorted perspectives of the self and the world around us that provide a superficial understanding but no critical in-depth reasoning (Horkheimer and Adorno 2016 (1969), pp. 128–176). This then leads to people reproducing the structures of domination that they were taught (Thompson 2017, pp. 7–9). While the first generation, including Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse, traced this struggle back to the Enlightenment and the limited and controlling version of reason that it developed and from that deduced a consequential path into authoritarianism to be the ultimate form of social control, the second generation took a different direction (Smulewicz-Zucker 2017, pp. 192–193). Habermas held a more positive outlook on the Enlightenment and viewed the issue rather with its mistreatment through modern institutions that left the project unfinished. He gave more credit to its understanding of reason and, to connect it to a new project of reason, suggested the means of language (Habermas 1971, p. 314; Schmidt 1982). He proposed communicative action as socially mediated reasoning through speech. Speech acts that are communicative action have the intention of acting through speech and are aimed at consensus and understanding rather

than manipulation or force (Habermas 2002 (1984), pp. 294–295). Alterations of such a consensus then happen through discourse, in which the consensus is challenged and potentially replaced. Through discourse, social norms and rules are negotiated and thus legitimised. Discourse thus carries significant power and is assumed to involve rational deliberation. Habermas, through his discourse ethics, proposed the premises of a context free of domination for discourse to happen (Rasiński 2019, pp. 47–48).

The issue here is, of course, how such a context free of domination is possible (Hall 2018, pp. 159–162). If the answer is that it is not possible, this leads to the question of, if discourse serves as the legitimisation for political structures, how can they ever be legitimate? The dimension of power in discourse is much more prevalent in the Foucauldian understanding of discourse. Michel Foucault conceived discourse as sets of rules and norms that apply in a certain context and that can be challenged and shifted over time through counter-discourse (Foucault 1972, pp. 113–117). Discourse determines what we are taught and what we consider to be normal or even given (Rasiński 2019, pp. 44–45). Power exists in all directions within discourse, including a level of self-government by those who are dominated through the norms with which they have been indoctrinated. Discourse can be the reason or effect of power, but those who are on top in a system of domination do not only distribute power but are also subjected to it. Power is thus not an equivalent of domination but processual (Lynch 2011, p. 18). Discourse can be controlled through three sets of internal rules. The first is commentary, in which the original discourse is supposedly debated but thereby is constantly repeated and hence solidified. The second is scientific disciplines, which create a set of boxes into which new knowledge has to fit first to be considered and included in the discourse. The third is exclusivity, through which access to a discourse can be denied based on specific criteria. These are complemented by three external levels of exclusion, which are prohibited words such as taboos, the division of madness, detailing what we consider reasonable or mad, and the will to truth, which limits what is considered knowledge to a scientific Eurocentric understanding (Foucault 1971; Moreton-Robinson 2011). Discourse is the context in which such knowledge is debated and can be reaffirmed, normalised or extended and changed. In modernity, political actors have instrumentalised knowledge to create information as a means of control (Feder 2011, pp. 60–61; Vilchis-Díaz 2021). To Foucault, the critical research of domination needs to be directed not towards those who govern and the structures of government but towards the systems of control that perpetuate domination in various ways. One of these systems is what he called "apparatuses of control" (Foucault 1980, p. 102), which facilitate "the formation and accumulation of knowledge – methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research" (Foucault 1980, p. 102).

This perspective creates an additional dimension when it comes to the matter of accessibility of knowledge and the control that comes with it. So far, the cited literature has been predominantly concerned with how access to knowledge is limited to controlling people by shaping their opinion

and hindering their ability to reflect outside a specific narrative. With Foucault, we now also need to consider how access to knowledge on people, read data and information, can facilitate structures of domination and can work as a means of control. He connected this type of control to capitalism as a new form of power called disciplinary power with a core in surveillance, through which control can be exercised, normalised and indoctrinated, starting as early as one's schooldays (Foucault 1980, pp. 123–125; Ricaurte 2019).

Control is not the only effect, however, that capitalism has on knowledge. Another is the commodification of knowledge. The "commodification of everything" (Hall 2023) is a much-debated feature of capitalism and an often-raised critique against it. Commodification of knowledge specifically is based on the assumption that the value of knowledge is equivalent to its potential for monetisation. Accordingly, the goal of knowledge production is financial gain, and knowledge that cannot be turned into immediate profit, such as foundational research or research on less marketable topics, loses its justification (McKenna 2022, p. 1284). This issue is particularly prevalent in the neo-liberal university, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but also extends further into the everyday, be it in education (Hursh 2001), concerning patents and intellectual property (Coriat and Weinstein 2012) or in many other areas. Steve Fuller (2013) explained this dynamic through Ernst Cassirer's distinction of substance and function (Cassirer 2000), in which knowledge is assessed no longer according to its substance or what it is but instead concerning its function or what it does, making it replaceable and market oriented. With this also came a new approach to knowledge as consumption that brought about standards of efficiency, simplicity and standardisation made to fit knowledge into a market logic (Fuller 2013, pp. 9–10). He reached the conclusion that this situation is rooted in the supposed fact that knowledge is first and foremost a positional good that belongs to the person who produced it. To make it a public good is thus a conscious choice and requires the according structures (Fuller 2013, p. 13).

This, of course, has far-reaching consequences. Depending on who owns which piece of knowledge, accessibility along with production can be severely influenced. This is an issue that I address in my paper by developing a systematic approach to assessing such consequences (Merkle 2024b). To accomplish this, I employ Edmund Husserl's method of eidetic variation in a constructivist interpretation. This allows me to systematise different consequences along the lines of knowledge ownership structures to make it clear precisely how power dynamics shift depending on the factor of knowledge owned by individuals, groups or everyone. Through the comparative approach, which allows researchers to see the three variations next to each other, it becomes clear that discriminatory structures can exist within all of them but that different types of discrimination each have different amounts of leeway. This is a consequence of the different types of knowledge governance which depend on the stance of knowledge ownership. These in turn leads to different modes of knowledge accessibility that can be more heavily focussed on the

type of knowledge or the person of the knower. Thus, it is very clear that limiting access to knowledge is a means of control and a source of conflict (Merkle 2024b).

2.4. Narratives for Peace

As we have now sufficiently observed, narratives, memories and discourse can be means of control and are employed to strengthen hegemonic structures. This is per se a violent endeavour, but it also concerns direct forms of violence as control over discourses can affect violent and armed conflicts significantly. However, as none of the topics discussed in this chapter are in and of themselves violent, there is a choice in using them in that way that can also be made differently (Lüders et al. 2016, pp. 42–49; Ross 2013, pp. 97–100). To sum up the chapter, I will hence turn to the opposite position and discuss how narrative, memory and discourse can also be means for peace and how this perspective can be furthered.

To start with, just as there are narratives of division, nationalism and exclusion, there are those that focus on unity, inclusion and peace. Moritz Ehrmann and Gearoid Millar (2021) identified three types of narratives that can help with making peace. Nuanced narratives generally still support their conflict party but are nonetheless critical. They include shifts in perspectives and re-evaluation of specific events and contexts or might find and address inconsistencies in the narratives that they were told. Reconciliatory narratives include an even stronger critique of the course of events. They also focus on critical self-reflection and the question of responsibility of parties' own side. This leads to openness to other paths of action. Finally, unifying narratives focus on similarities to the opposing party and show empathy towards their struggles or reasoning and choices. Shared hardships or problems that can best be tackled together are a strong focus of these narratives as well (Ehrmann and Millar 2021, pp. 599–603). The authors also stress how narratives are constantly negotiated within a group and particularly drastic events can lead to shifts and be windows of opportunity for narratives to turn towards peace making (Ehrmann and Millar 2021, pp. 603–606).

Even when such narratives do not exist, mere diversification of narratives can help. This allows people to perceive nuance in situations that are often shown as very clear in dominant narratives. As a consequence, more diverse narratives can lead to more openness towards the perspective of the other party or even just to an awareness of different perspectives (Uluğ et al. 2021, p. 809). A more extreme take on this involves counter-narratives that question or undermine the contents of the original narrative. Counter-narratives can even be consciously developed and actively placed as a means of shifting the discourse in an intended direction and drawing supporters away from the original narrative (Braddock and Horgan 2016). Similar efforts exist as discourse intervention (Karlberg 2005).

In conflict resolution and peace work, the approach to this is narrative transformation. This is a process through which conflict narratives are dissolved and replaced with shared narratives and

includes joint memory work and an active process to reappraise grievances towards the other party. Through this effort, the underlying narratives of conflict and harm can be addressed and ideally ended. Typical approaches are the presentation of different narratives side by side to emphasise shared themes and to make individual stories visible to humanise the other (Garagozov and Gadirova 2019). This also includes actively constructing new narratives by focussing on the future that one wants to create through them and working together to determine how to build it (Garagozov 2012, p. 105). The idea is not only to change narratives and memories and give them new interpretations but, in doing so, also to affect identity. Identity is shaped and re-shaped through the experience of events as well as of narratives. Previous experiences that might lead to conflict identities can thus also be counteracted by allowing for new experiences to help in reconstructing the self, outside the conflict. Here again, access to different individual stories and collective narratives play a significant role in developing a more complex and nuanced perspective on oneself, one's own surroundings and the other side (Federman 2016, pp. 161–165). Not only between conflicting parties are identities and narratives relevant to peace making. The same applies to external actors in the field, such as peacebuilders.

This is something that I address concerning versions of cosmopolitan thinking in peacebuilding and conflict resolution (Merkle 2024c). International interventions bring with them a significant number of foreign personnel who also have their own horizon of values. It has been shown empirically that most peacebuilders consider themselves to be cosmopolitans but do so by referencing a decidedly liberal frame. I thus show how this notion needs to be challenged and replaced with a more localised and non-violent version of cosmopolitanism. Accordingly, peacebuilders not only enhance their standing within the intervened-in communities by taking a less hegemonic standpoint but also heighten the chances of success for their intervention by leaving more space for the above-mentioned approaches that only work on a local, context-sensitive level. This is a matter of access to knowledge as the education, socialisation and discursive environment of the international peacebuilding community heavily influence such mindsets. Access to more critical knowledge and knowledge from outside these self-perpetuating circles would help to diversify perspectives and allow more reflection on parties' own role but also lead to more openness towards other approaches to peace (Autesserre 2017; Pingeot 2020). This in turn affects the practices of making peace as they are carried out with a different perspective on what peace is and on the affected communities.

The common theme of this chapter has been how access to knowledge, diverse perspectives and experiences, allows for a more differentiated perspective on conflict and greater openness to reconciliation and peace making. To have access to and to own knowledge constitute a crucial dimension of an emancipated and self-actualising life and allow one to expand one's perspective and through that facilitate constructive interaction with others. The next chapter will thus focus

more strongly on knowledge production and the institutions behind it to gain a deeper understanding of how knowledge accessibility is influenced by knowledge institutions.

3. Production of Knowledge

The production of knowledge is far from being monopolised by academia. Knowledge is constantly produced all around us. This process starts with the individual sense making of ourselves and of the surrounding world. Through observation and interaction, we order the world and fit it into a coherent picture, which we typically understand intuitively as an objective reality and common-sensical (Berger and Luckmann 1967, pp. 34–37). Out of these interpretations, we create intersubjective meanings that allow us to create a shared lifeworld with other people and to communicate knowledge without being permanently misunderstood. Language, as an agreed-upon system of signs, allows to communicate and preserve knowledge. Through repetition and familiarisation, a "stock of knowledge" (Berger and Luckmann 1967, p. 58) is created that is easily accessible, while knowledges outside that requires more work and active learning. Knowledge is socially distributed, so we cannot easily access all the knowledge that concerns us but at times need to rely on others in our day-to-day life (Berger and Luckmann 1967, pp. 49–61). In a social context, we produce shared knowledge based on the shared aspects of the groups which we are a part of. This can be intimate knowledge on relationships or shared interests in private settings or more formalised expert knowledge in educational, work-related or activist settings. Different knowledges might overlap in specific situations, creating complex and interwoven practices (Acioli et al. 2016). As the previous chapter has shown, when knowledge is produced separately by groups, it can lead to very different narratives and thus perspectives in conflict. This is especially problematic as many processes of knowledge production are exclusive or set on perpetuating specific types of knowledges and opinions. This tendency is furthered by the general neo-liberalisation of many spaces of formalised knowledge production, the consequences of which will be addressed in the following (Brown 2011; Milne 2015).
This chapter will consider different settings of knowledge production in civil society, education and institutions and the respective power dynamics at play. My main contribution in this regard consists of a critique of academic knowledge production and a closer look at different systemic approaches to the institutionalisation of knowledge production.

3.1. Civil Society and the Private Sector

Besides everyday knowledge production, civil society actors and organisations are highly involved in more formalised ways of producing knowledge. They create and store specialised and traditional knowledge, further technological advancements and influence knowledge production focal points through financial and political influence. They also play a key role in the way in which knowledge is distributed and interpreted beyond the institutions of knowledge production (Suarsana et al. 2022, p. 3).

An important part of this is to understand affected individuals and communities as experts on their own life worlds and to treat them accordingly when it comes to structural approaches to the respective topics. This touches on innumerable topics in all aspects of the human experience. It includes the intricate knowledge of HIV/Aids that existed within queer communities at the height of the epidemic, who provided first-hand knowledge, financial resources and discursive shifts to the cause (Goldstein 2015, pp. 128–129). However, it also entails local movements that inform and negotiate the infrastructural advancements in their communities (Hess 2022) and local women's clubs participating in expertise gathering on rural development (Suarsana 2022). These and many other examples share the general context that those who live in a certain situation have a relevant and deep understanding of the experience and of what is needed. The mentioned examples also show that this expertise is not only something to be harvested by researchers but instead can be turned into one's own structures of knowledge production, interpretation and distribution and can have significant political agency.

Political weight is also a key factor when it comes to social movements and civil society organisations that primarily function as political actors. They participate in political agenda setting and increase awareness and public pressure. As such, they constantly produce knowledge. This includes processual knowledges, the production of which is likely to be unintended, such as knowledge on stakeholder access, campaign success or other strategic dimensions of their work (Lamble 2022, pp. 49–50). It also includes more intentional knowledge on the topic that is produced in more or less formal ways, such as through conversations and activist practice but also through explicit studies and analysis undertaken by civil society actors. NGOs are amongst other civil society actors that are often concerned with producing their own research to emphasise their cause and can be well versed in valuing, accessing and showcasing local knowledge. In particular, international NGOs also tend to play a significant role when it comes to global knowledge sharing and the creation of networks (Fouksman 2022).

Another dimension of civil society knowledge production is citizen science. The term describes an increasingly popular type of research that includes active contributions from citizens, typically as volunteers. Citizen science has become progressively more advanced, particularly with the rise of online formats, which also allow it to reach a far greater audience of potential participants. Much citizen science involves using a large number of individuals to gather data, but collaboration on interpretive dimensions of projects is possible as well. It is also an effective way to create research that is relevant to the public and to interest people and involve them in academic research. Of course, this approach also has its challenges, such as the very complex question of knowledge ownership that I have already addressed in the previous chapter and that becomes infinitely more complex with the involvement of a large number of volunteers (Haklay et al. 2021). While one of the perhaps publicly best-known and easily accessible versions of citizen science is the mapping of local wildlife, the options are diverse. Humanities profit from the archival work of volunteers

(Heinisch et al. 2021). Stem research benefits from citizens training machines and giving AI different opposites (Franzen et al. 2021). Increased self-tracking, for example through mobile phone apps and smart watches, provides ample data that are of great interest in numerous disciplines, including medicine, despite their sensitive nature (Heyen 2020). In peace and conflict research, a prominent use of citizen science lies in creating digital maps of conflict zones, on which people in the affected areas can mark relevant information, such as dangerous and safe areas, shelter, food options or safe travel routes (Chamales and Baker 2011; Kahl and Larrauri 2013).

Much of this information is unquestionably not only interesting to civil society, researchers and political actors but also potentially profitable and thus a valuable resource for the private sector. Companies can of course make use of the knowledge that is publicly available, be it scientific research, citizen science or information gathered by other actors. Nonetheless, many private sector enterprises choose to conduct their own research. Contrary to public research, actors in the economic sector typically do not publish their outcomes but instead treat research as investment in an advance in knowledge that will have financial advantages (Abramo et al. 2021, p. 1). On one hand, private sector research tends to focus on highly specialised issues and can thus lead to very concrete and marketable solutions, whereas academic research often remains on a more generalised level of outcomes (Pray and Fuglie 2015, p. 408). On the other hand, private companies hold tremendous power and gatekeep knowledge that the public has significant stakes in, often despite profiting from either public funding or public research (Collyer et al. 2017, p. 102). This is of course not to say that cooperation in research between the public and the private sector does not exist or that there are no schemes for private enterprises to take a responsible role in society, yet these decisions are typically at the discretion of the private actor (Sonck et al. 2017).

This issue also arises in areas related to Peace and Conflict Studies. International cooperations increasingly play a role in public diplomacy, turning consumer research into political leverage or using their economic knowledge to position themselves on debated issues (White 2015, pp. 308–309). Another obvious example is private military actors, which are increasingly employed in conflict zones. This approach includes involving profit-oriented corporations directly in knowledge production around security risk management (Christensen and Petersen 2017), and their presence can alter narratives regarding the conflict, thus affecting the likelihood of sustainable peace (Faulkner 2019, pp. 83–87). Interestingly, the repeated cases of human rights abuse by private military and security companies in the early 2000s led to another form of knowledge production as international humanitarian law was adapted to provide a stronger regulative framework for the work of private military contractors (Gasser and Malzacher 2020).

3.2. Educational Perspectives

Knowledge production is also a vital aspect of education. The constant occupation with knowledge in educational institutions not only leads to the learning and debating of existing knowledge but also necessarily includes the creation of new knowledge. Unfortunately, many educational settings still focus more on knowledge transfer and information-based learning than on approaches to knowledge creation. Such approaches extend beyond knowledge production, which happens somewhat incidentally in a learning environment, towards methods and curricula that explicitly encourage knowledge production by enabling students, emphasising collaboration and designing tasks concerning adding to the existing knowledge (Chen and Hong 2016, pp. 266–269). When employed, knowledge-building approaches lead not only to the production of factual knowledge but also to meaning making and the negotiation of structures and norms (Kim 2022, pp. 216–220).

By enabling learners, this approach also opposes violent practices concerning knowledge. While epistemic violence will be discussed in broader terms in chapter 4, for now, a perspective on knowledge and violence in education and specifically on knowledge production is nonetheless relevant. Empowering learners to engage in knowledge production is particularly relevant to increase societal justice. Building curricula necessarily establishes a hierarchy of knowledges, separating them into types considered important to teach and types viewed as less important or unimportant for learners. Especially learners from minority backgrounds can thus be further marginalised by experiencing their knowledge being deemed less relevant and accordingly lacking the knowledge deemed valuable in comparison with their fellow learners from majority backgrounds (Pradhan 2017, 382, 392). This discursive dimension of debating and negotiating knowledge, developing hybrid knowledge or crossing boundaries between knowledges is a central moment of empowerment (Gutiérrez et al. 2017, pp. 50–53; Oliveira Andeotti 2016).

A field that is concerned with these kinds of emancipatory approaches to education is peace education. I have already touched upon the topic in the introductory chapter regarding its important role in conveying knowledge towards peace. I would now like to concern myself briefly with its role and potential for inclusive knowledge production. In this case, knowledge production means the creation, merging and reinterpretation of knowledge that helps to advance peace making. As peace education focusses largely on the capacities of human interaction that will help to make peace, such as critical thinking and the ability to change perspectives and to allow for ambiguity and simultaneity of positions (Reardon 2021 (1988), pp. 73–78; Rojas Aravena 2020, pp. 11–12), it is appropriate for approaches that encourage knowledge production. I have added to this discussion (Merkle 2024b) by detailing how peace education can be used as a tool specifically to counteract the hegemonic tendencies within knowledge production by first determining which dimensions of knowledge will be discouraged and then specifically working

against that. I achieved this by systematising the modes of knowledge production that may arise from different variations of knowledge ownership and then considering what kind of marginalisation and empowerment might happen within these frameworks. As a result, needs for improvement concerning discrimination become apparent and peace education can then provide the capabilities and concrete tools to evaluate the respective dynamics and work towards alternatives in a collaborative manner.

Knowledge production towards peace can take many forms. One is the dimension of connecting local knowledge to the teachings of peace education. This is a particularly relevant approach to counter the critique of liberal and Eurocentric dimensions in peace education (Niyitunga 2020) and allows for local appropriation of a larger concept (Gounari 2013). The relevance of these appropriations is a topic that I discussed in my paper (Merkle 2024c) concerning cosmopolitanisms for peace. My argument that larger theoretical frameworks need to be wide enough to be changed and appropriated locally to avoid falling into the trap of hegemonic universalism can be applied here in a similar manner. Accordingly, knowledge for peace making that is specific to a context and that provides different and distinct localised perspectives is created. This also allows the inclusion of conceptions and practices of peace that are typically not part of Eurocentric educational canons (Cremin et al. 2018). Taking a more critical approach to peace education, there is also the possibility of tackling the underlying structures of hegemony in a society through a critical and transformation-oriented understanding (Standish 2015). This provides a broader perspective on peace education that specifically includes not only armed conflict but also hegemonic structures and forms of oppression and structural violence. By linking these to pedagogies of resistance and drawing from different subversive educational projects, Monisha Bajaj proposed to develop critical peace education, aiming to link it with social movements (Bajaj 2015), hence "weav[ing] together analysis, education and action" (Bajaj 2015, p. 160).

3.3. Institutionalised Knowledge Production

While me might first think of universities, they are of course not the only institutions that consider knowledge production as one of their duties. International organisations, for example, act as think tanks with significant political leverage. This is an ongoing development, with several IOs increasing their focus on knowledge production over the past decades, and is best illustrated by the constantly rising number of scientific and research-based publications (Zapp 2018). These publications stand in a clear political context and pursue the goal of supporting the political views and values of the respective IO. They tend to play a significant part in mainstreaming certain ideas in which a certain issue lies. As many large IOs not only have significant political power but also tend to support Eurocentric, liberal agendas, they play a substantial role in reinforcing such perspectives. They are also part of epistemic networks in which the work and sphere of influence

of different IOs overlap, leading to shared knowledges and agendas. IOs produce and interpret knowledges in different ways by producing it within their own organisation, spreading it through networks, publications and other official channels and popularising it not only through frequent mentions but also by making it conditions of their services (Nay 2014, pp. 211–215). Many IOs also have the ability to mainstream their knowledge through their direct and indirect influence on education through curricula and policies, financing and, again, network activities (Shahjahan 2016). While this topic plays an important role in hegemonic dimensions of knowledge production, universities do so as well. As knowledge production is one of their core tasks, I will focus on them for the rest of the chapter. Additionally, despite the increased presence of other sites of scientific knowledge production, universities are still the main source of research output by far and play a significant role as collaborators with other actors in research (Godin and Gingras 2000, p. 277). This is also part of the neo-liberalisation of universities that has led to a system of academic capitalism in which particularly the knowledge production within academia has been changed to adhere to a market logic (Choudry and Vally 2020, pp. 11–12). Industry collaborations and the marketability of knowledge have become increasingly relevant for universities (Hoffman 2021, pp. 543–544). Nowadays, universities undergo a constant process of evaluation, comparison and ranking that has significant influence on their perceived standing and value and thus on the conditions under which research is produced. This system encourages individualised research success and thus hampers collaboration and cooperation. At the same time, regarding the research output, it encourages standardisation to allow for comparability and unified presentation. Research is also increasingly treated as a commodity that needs to persist in a competitive environment. This is not due to the quality of research but is based on categories of marketability and perceived usefulness, which also lead to a reduction in the diversity of research. By emphasising and rewarding high output and standardised research, academic institutions try to position themselves as uniquely productive and desirable collaborators (Cannizzo 2018; Gonzales and Núñez 2021, pp. 85–92; Lawless and Chen 2017). An important example in this regard is the field of academic publishing. Publishing is a central requirement for scholars to succeed in their career. They need to publish frequently and in highly ranked journals, the ranking of which again follows a logic of marketability of output. The large publishing houses of academic content make significant profit and dictate the formats that lead to success in publication. They also decide how their search engines work, which determines which publications will receive more citations, again influencing the ranking of a journal and the careers of the respective scholars (Posada and Chen 2018). As such, the publishing industry also rewards standardised and trend-oriented research. The more research is considered a commodity and the less it is viewed as a public good, with access to it being a right, the more it turns into a market-dominated account of knowledge production. Accordingly, particularly marginalised spaces, persons and knowledges are further discriminated against and disadvantaged (Gonzales and Núñez 2021, pp. 93–94). Structural

violence in academia is thus supported by the neo-liberalisation of the university aggravating an already-existing problem. It is also important to mention that this structural violence also goes along with direct violence against those who nonetheless claim their spot in academia (Cheechoo 2023; Raisinghani and Bhagchandani 2023).

Success in academia, particularly in so-called elite universities, is still first and foremost tied to class. In maintaining the elitist structures of academia, a global elite not only ensures that very few manage to gain access to its circles far beyond the university but also that the knowledges that is taught tends to retain the system rather than subvert it (Demeter 2020, pp. 63–69). Class is of course not the only characteristic due to which people are kept from academia; gender is another. Not only are women still significantly less likely to receive tenure (Weisshaar 2017) but also their perspectives are still often shunned, with research being taken less seriously as soon as it sounds like a feminist critique (Pereira 2017, pp. 28–38). Other characteristics are race and nationality. Some topics are barely present in the academic canon due to collective biases or their perceived relevance to only marginalised groups (Bhambra 2016; Brenner and Han 2021).

While the different dimensions of epistemic violence, particularly from a decolonial perspective, will be the sole focal point of chapter 4, I would like for now to consider the implications for knowledge production. As has already been addressed concerning class, the homogeneous nature of academia and its exclusive policies lead to a lack of diversity in knowledges and thus to a lack of perspectives on knowledge production. That causes a lack of produced knowledge that has the potential to change the structures, leading to a self-perpetuating cycle of hegemonic knowledge production in academia. The system follows a centre–periphery logic, with the centre being located in the global North, particularly with highly recognised universities and journals (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021, pp. 886–888; Ndofirepi and Gwaravanda 2019). This is also where most of the funding for academic research is located and where the processes for acquiring this funding are determined, giving applicants from this part of the world a strategic advantage that leads to better working conditions, including access to research facilities and materials, again raising the likelihood and frequency of high-quality research output. Of course, the criteria for what is deemed high quality are decided in the global North. To increase their chance of success within this system, scholars from the global South, along with scholars from other marginalised communities, must adapt to these standards and in the process can lose their original perspective and access to non-Eurocentric knowledge. This in turn perpetuates the homogeneous knowledge that is produced within academia (Demeter 2020, pp. 63–81; Fanon 1961, pp. 46–47).

3.4. Collaborative and Subversive Perspectives

Due to the structural quality of the above-mentioned dynamics, decolonial scholars have called for a break with academia and its Eurocentric tradition (Mignolo 2007, pp. 449–453). This is of course easier said than done, as the number of academic publications by renowned decolonial

writers shows. It is also not my place to weigh in as a white, European researcher. Instead, I would like to concern myself in this chapter with practices of subversion and allyship from within academia and as researchers situated at the centre.

A contribution that I made (Merkle 2023) to the debate on allyship with decolonial endeavours focusses on an intrinsic critique of academia that amplifies and supports the decolonial one. I argued for the intersection of the decolonial arguments with Paul Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism and its critique of academia. Feyerabend (Feyerabend 1975) asserted that the current state of universities is not even in the interest of researchers from the global North, and many of his points of criticism, such as the limited understanding of what knowledge is and its exclusive and self-perpetuating nature, mirror decolonial arguments. I thus propose that epistemological anarchism is a valuable addition to decolonial allyship as it leads to a supplementary critique from inside and outside academia.

Next to critique, there is the necessity for practice. Feyerabend proposed one approach to research through his epistemological anarchism (Feyerabend 1975), but there are also more concrete renderings from different critical perspectives that aim at pluriversal, subversive and inclusive research. Many of these approaches fall broadly under the terminologies of collaborative, participatory and community research (Arribas Lozano 2022; McAllister 2021). All of them describe projects in which the researcher's is not the only perspective present in the project. Instead, different and diverse voices are visible in the final project and, depending on the specific approach, have more or less say in all stages of the research project. When knowledge is produced in a shared effort of scientific and non-scientific participants, this has, generally speaking, a number of positive effects. For one, the produced knowledge, while reaching scientific standards, is also deeply rooted in the local context, giving it relevance to the struggles of the community that co-produced it. Additionally, the approach tends to shape the perspectives of both the researchers, by making them aware of different perspectives beyond the scientific one, and the community, by increasing its trust in the research outcomes and thus its willingness to work with them (van der Hel 2016, pp. 168–169).

Carried out correctly, these approaches will emphasise perspectives and voices that would otherwise be marginalised. They hence have the unique potential to include in scholarly debates precisely that knowledge that is typically not deemed relevant or rigorous enough. It also, contrary to more traditional approaches, treats participant knowledge not as primary material but as voices on an equal footing with the researchers. Of course, they also raise issues such as questions around knowledge ownership, recognition and payment for the work undertaken (Glass and Newman 2015). Other perspectives highlight stronger control over the role that the researcher takes. This can mean stricter and more reflexive versions of positionality that understand it as an ongoing and constantly checked process (Soedirgo and Glas 2020). It can also imply the highlighting of approaches in which the researcher becomes a witness with no voice of their own, as is common

with *testimonios*. As autoethnographic texts, they can also become, depending on the background of the author, either a continuation of positionality to the extreme or a work that is carried out without the attachment to the global North or with the researcher as a mere facilitator of a method (Arfuso 2022; Barrios et al. 2024).

In an article that is not part of this dissertation, I proposed additional access, to include more diverse voices and knowledges in academia, by including remote field research in our project. This allows for more diversity among researchers and research participants. The former category would be more inclusive to those who cannot enter the field as easily in the traditional sense due to health reasons, safety concerns, financial constraints, care responsibilities and many other reasons. For the latter, there would be access to voices that are typically hard to reach, be it for infrastructural reasons of accessibility or because being notably involved with research would be unsafe for them (Merkle 2024a).

Summing up this chapter, knowledge production is closely tied to hegemony and exclusivity. It is important to include a variety of people in research and to provide the framework for them to be heard through different approaches and methodologies. The next chapter will dive deeper into the intricacies of exclusion and marginalisation concerning knowledge to allow a more nuanced perspective on how to work towards peace and against oppression in the last chapter.

4. Oppression of Knowledge

Oppression and erasure of knowledge constitute a powerful tool in that they can make the already-discussed and subsequent aspects of power dynamics and hegemony around knowledge a non-issue. Accordingly, resistance is fundamentally undercut as the ability to understand and pronounce domination is taken away. This chapter addresses the theoretical conceptualisation of this type of violence and highlights its consequences. My contribution in this regard is the exemplary elaboration of cases of epistemic oppression throughout my papers and the exploration of means of resistance against it through education, critique and practice.

4.1. Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Violence

Epistemic injustice as a concept was first comprehensively theorised by Miranda Fricker in her ground-breaking book of the same title (Fricker 2007), in which she detailed two different types of injustice based on knowledge hegemony. The first type is testimonial injustice, whereby a testimony that a person gives is not taken seriously due to some characteristic of that person that makes them supposedly less credible. This works the other way round as well, with specific attributes of a person being able to credit them with trust that might not be justifiable through their behaviour or qualifications (Fricker 2007, pp. 17–29). The other type is hermeneutical injustice, in which someone suffers a disadvantage from not having the ability to describe or contextualise something. This inability is not a matter of talent but stems from the epistemological context in which the person is raised. This context is shaped by those in power, leaving marginalised communities and individuals with no vocabulary or context to understand and articulate their experiences of marginalisation. Again, there is a flip side to this whereby the discriminating person will also be unable to explain their behaviour, equally lacking the necessary context, but will of course not be disadvantaged by this (Fricker 2007, pp. 147–152). This resonates with Frantz Fanon's description of the colonised subject as only being able to see themself through the gaze of the coloniser (Fanon 1993 (1952), pp. 141–209).

Due to the far-reaching prominence of the concept of epistemic injustice, a considerable amount of work has been carried out on it. Fricker herself suggested that the erasure of epistemic injustice is a necessary prerequisite for political participation (Fricker 2013). Others have made theoretical contributions to the debate by elaborating on the concept in different directions, such as the notion of epistemic trust, looking further into why we consider someone's testimony to be trustworthy or not (Origgi 2012) and the addition of further forms of epistemic injustice, such as formative injustice, referring to injustice during education (Nikolaidis 2021). Moreover, there are countless empirical studies showing the wide applicability of the conceptual lens to different cases (McConkey 2004; Ndofirepi and Gwaravanda 2019; Scrutton 2017; Temper and Del Bene 2016).

Epistemic violence, conversely, is a concept that can be traced back to Gayatri Spivak's influential essay "Can the Subaltern speak?" (Spivak 1988). While Fricker wrote primarily from a feminist perspective, Spivak combined this with a postcolonial lens that shifted the focus of the concept significantly. While Spivak did not conceptualise epistemic violence with as much detail as Fricker provided for epistemic injustice, the two concepts speak to a similar sentiment. She also considered the epistemic exclusion of marginalised groups by denying them the opportunity to speak, developing Gramsci's conception of the subaltern (Gramsci 1971, pp. 52–53) towards a postcolonial understanding that takes into consideration the uniquely disempowered position of the marginalised in the postcolonial periphery. Contrary to the European working class and privileged classes in postcolonial countries, the postcolonial subaltern is entirely removed from the struggle for inequality. The subaltern is marginalised in an intersectional way that leaves them with no opportunity to articulate their own marginalisation in a manner which would allow them to enter into a discourse with any other group (Spivak 1988). This might lead to their complete disappearance as culturally distinct beings (Fanon 1993 (1952), pp. 223–232). Spivak also criticised, in this regard, the role of poststructuralist thinkers who construct themselves as critical scholars in alliance with marginalised communities but fail to understand the unique situation of the postcolonial subaltern and even contribute to their othering by disregarding their difference and portraying themselves as their saviours (Bhambra 2021; Moreton-Robinson 2011; Scauso 2020, pp. 142–170; Spivak 1988). This intersection, which is at the core of epistemic violence, hence creates a far more impenetrable marginalisation than the concept of epistemic injustice (Doan 2017), which in turn is more inclusive to different forms of discrimination. By then reintroducing Foucault to the topic through the notion of discipline, the postcolonial other is created as a binary opposition to the European subject. The opposition is materialised through means of discipline, tied to the structure of modern society, including states and their disciplinary systems. The postcolonial other is discursively constructed to form the antithesis of this structure, thereby legitimising its exclusion (Castro-Gómez 2018, pp. 217–220). It is through this connection to modernity/coloniality (Quijano 2007) on a structural level that the topic of epistemic violence can make the step from a postcolonial discourse, as a critique still situated within a Eurocentric canon, to a decolonial one, delinking it from that very system of hegemony, and thus become especially relevant to the perspective taken in this thesis.

4.2. Epistemic Oppression

A further development of the concepts of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence is the reframing as epistemic oppression. Fricker herself introduced the terminology to describe epistemic injustice that is suffered "in a systematic way" (Fricker 1999, p. 208). This is a recurring distinction in the literature on epistemic oppression, highlighting the systemic or structural dimension of the violence. While all types of epistemic injustice and violence are based on

systemic reasons for discrimination, this does not necessarily mean that experiences of epistemic injustice always are. Epistemic oppression, however, focusses on structural and continuous forms of epistemic injustice and violence. It thus persistently denies or hinders epistemic participation (Dotson 2014, pp. 115–117). This exclusion can happen on three levels. The first level concerns what a person knows, meaning how far their knowledge is trusted and they are considered credible knowers. It is thus a systemic version of Fricker's testimonial justice. This type of oppression is also the easiest, though not easy, to change as it requires no significant alteration of the belief systems of the oppressors but merely the acknowledgement that the oppressed is capable of knowing and a credible knower at that. Shifts on this level are also a normal occurrence over time (Dotson 2014, pp. 123–126). The second level considers how a person can know and is a systemic version of hermeneutical injustice. It concerns how oppressed knowers are excluded from acquiring knowledge resources that the oppressors simply have access to and how, even if acquired, these knowledge resources are not sufficient to explain adequately the experiences of the oppressed. This type of exclusion does not change over time if change is not actively pursued. For change to happen, the experience of the oppressed as being excluded must be heard and a shift of knowledge resources enforced to account for the lacking elements. This typically occurs through the development of alternative epistemic resources that will then gradually find access to the hegemonic epistemology through consistent resistance (Dotson 2014, pp. 126–129). Finally, the third level addresses oppression on the level of epistemological systems. Through this oppression, the experience of the oppressed can enter the oppressive epistemological system without provoking any change but is instead situated as a marginalised irrelevant experience within the system. This creates a kind of helplessness that is not part of the other two levels as the lack of opposition from the hegemonic perspective does not leave room for agency. The testimony of oppression thus has no leverage; it is made unimportant, invisible or impossible. For this type of oppression to change, the oppressors need to recognise the limits of their epistemological system, including everything that constitutes their life world and belief system, emphasising the need for decolonial allyship (Dotson 2014, pp. 129–132). This is nothing that can be achieved through strategic action by the oppressed. Kristie Dotson even suggested that the only option is to work towards the acknowledgement that there might be things outside one's own epistemology, whereas an actual change of epistemological systems might in fact be dependent on the epistemic resilience of the individual person (Dotson 2014, p. 132).

To gain a more concrete understanding of epistemic oppression, José Medina suggested the transfer of Iris Marion Young's five faces of oppression, which are explicitly meant to describe structural oppression, to epistemic oppression (Medina 2019, pp. 22–23). He specifically had racial violence in mind, but they are also applicable to other forms of epistemic oppression (Nikolaidis 2021, p. 386). Young described five forms of oppression, which can happen separately but are often connected or intertwined: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness,

cultural imperialism and violence (Young 1990, pp. 48–63). Neither of the authors explicitly discussed how each of these forms of oppression would translate into the realm of the epistemic, but a few examples spring to mind immediately: we can see epistemic exploitation when we look at translators or local collaborators in research who are rarely credited (Connell 2021, p. 341) or through the appropriation of knowledges (Alcoff 2022; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021, p. 885; Walker 2022, p. 53). Epistemic marginalisation was sufficiently explained by Fricker (Fricker 1999, pp. 152–161). Powerlessness, which Young described as a lack of "authority, status and sense of self" (Young 2013, p. 57), also seems to include lacking self-efficacy and autonomy. These descriptions seem to be related to what Spivak referred to, in her continuation of the original thought by Marx, as the subaltern's consciousness, which is hard to form and even harder to have recognised (Spivak 1988, pp. 70–71). Spivak, of course, also provided a definition of epistemic violence, leaving us with cultural imperialism as the final concept. Cultural imperialism is already an epistemic category that refers to the hegemonic positioning of one cultural context above another, hence introducing a hierarchy of life worlds, with one becoming the norm and the other the abnormality (Rodney 2022, pp. 192–210; Young 1990, pp. 58–59).

A critique of epistemic oppression is at the core of the analytical perspective that this dissertation takes, and all three individual contributions touch on the issue in different ways. In my first contribution (Merkle 2024b), I address the structural dimensions of epistemic exclusion and consider how different types of marginalisation can be fostered or hindered depending on the surrounding structures of knowledge ownership. The paper's contribution lies with the systematic approach to these dynamics, through which it clearly shows how knowledge ownership is directly tied to means of oppression, particularly through control over epistemic resources and their distribution or erasure. It also investigates how this can be made fruitful for a critical re-evaluation of peace education approaches. The connection between epistemic resources and oppression is exemplified in my second and third contributions from different vantage points. The second paper (Merkle 2023) addresses the implications that this has for academic knowledge production in a more general sense. The topic of epistemic violence is at the centre of this paper, which asks how a combination of decolonial approaches and epistemological anarchism might offer means of resistance to epistemic violence, particularly in academia, and finds that systemic oppression can best be countered from within academia through allyship, for which the combination of the two approaches defines a promising framework. The third paper (Merkle 2024c) thematises the consequences when epistemic violence leads to systems of oppression that extend beyond academia into the practice of peacebuilding by using the example of cosmopolitanism. It becomes apparent that the real-world implications of practices of epistemic oppression not only form systems of oppression and hegemonic practice but also have very negative consequences for the outcomes of peace processes. Every paper also discusses an approach to counteracting these tendencies, which are peace education and education towards resistance (Merkle 2024b), critique

and allyship as academic means of resistance (Merkle 2023) and openness and pluriversalisation as practices of everyday resistance (Merkle 2024c).

These contributions thus give an impression of the different dimensions and levels that come with epistemic oppression, how they interact with other forms of marginalisation and oppression and how far reaching their consequences are. How detrimental these consequences can be will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.3. Erasure and Epistemicide

Spivak's writings already considered the inability of the subaltern to speak, meaning the silencing of their voices as they are not heard (Spivak 1988). This is due to speech acts involving both a speaker and a hearer as active participants who need to cooperate for a message to be received. A speaker is thus dependent on their audience (Dotson 2011, pp. 237–238). This continuous failure to communicate that happens if the audience does not engage in speech acts leads to the silencing of the speaker. In not being heard, it is as if they cannot speak. Silencing can take the form of the audience not recognising the speaker as someone capable or credible in knowing, or the speaker might themself recognise the ignorance of their audience and might change or limit their testimony accordingly to make sure that they are heard at least to some degree (Dotson 2011, pp. 242–244). Fricker gave the additional account of not being able to express one's own experience through a lack of epistemic resources that are designed for this purpose. The dismissal of knowledge and experiences and lack of resources for contextualisation lead to different forms of silencing: an inability to express and be heard in one's whole testimony. This is notoriously difficult to identify as the whole type of oppression lies in it not being perceived. An approach here would be to identify the circumstances that lead to silencing and then look out for them (Bhambra et al. 2020, pp. 66–67; Dotson 2011, p. 251).

However, silence cannot only ever be a means of oppression but can also be instrumentalised as a tool of resistance. Silence can furthermore be a form of non-compliance, which refuses not only the terms of oppression but also a Eurocentric call for action (Ferrari 2020b, pp. 123–125). It can also be an acknowledgement of epistemic violence, which happens if the subaltern attempts to speak, or a process of personal meaning making (Ferrari 2020b, pp. 134–136). In the face of oppression, silence can be a mode of bearing witness and commemoration without laying these practices bare to the oppressor (Ferrari 2020a, pp. 330–331), including academic research as a form of translation of subaltern lifeworld into the dominant discourse through reduction and appropriation (MacLure et al. 2010; Vázquez 2011; Walker 2022, p. 53). Accordingly, in research, it is important to be aware of silence and of what is not said but also to respect silence that is a refusal of academia and its research processes (Guillemin et al. 2016; Thompson 2021, pp. 257–258).

Hegemonic silencing, however, can then lead to erasure, whereby what does not fit the dominant discourse will be made completely invisible (Fanon 1993 (1952), pp. 223–232). This might mean the complete absence of topics from a discourse or their presence within the discourse only from a very specific vantage point (Bhambra 2016; Vázquez 2011, pp. 27–29). Erasure can also apply to whole identities and predominantly affects intersectionally marginalised individuals and communities whose existence seems at odds with the dominant discourse (Lorde 2007, pp. 40–44). Different types of oppression, both epistemic and otherwise, along with stereotyping and silencing, build a tight net of marginalisation that is reflected in the absence of specific identities from dominant discourses as barely imaginable and invisible (Abdalla 2023, pp. 9–13; Cruz 2018; Fernández-Llamazares et al. 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021).

The most extreme form that silencing and erasure can take is epistemicide (Brunner 2020, pp. 136–139; Horsthemke 2022, pp. 94–101). This term describes the complete "extermination of knowledge and ways of knowing" (Grosfoguel 2013, p. 74). Grosfoguel argued that four genocides that also included epistemicides had already happened over the course of the 16th and into the 17th century and that these epistemicides determined the hegemonic position of Eurocentric and patriarchal knowledge in the coloniality/modernity. These four epistemicides were committed against the Andalusian Muslims and Jews, who were forced to convert to Catholicism, which also led to the abandonment and destruction of their cultural and religious knowledge, against the indigenous populations of the Americas, where written cultural documents were wilfully destroyed and the people evangelised, against enslaved Africans, who were mass-kidnapped and forced to abandon their cultures, beliefs and languages upon their arrival in the Americas, and, finally against European women, who were punished for acquiring and preserving knowledge and therefore were branded as witches (Grosfoguel 2013, pp. 78–86). While the consequences of these epistemicides have shaped the forms and borders of our epistemologies to this day, we are not just talking about a historic issue. In particular, indigenous communities grapple with recent or contemporary versions of epistemicide (do Mar Castro Varela and Tamayo Rojas 2020, p. 231; Nielsen 2022). The recent publicity that the issue of residential schools has received also shows how hard it is to break through the structural silencing of these ongoing issues (Whiting 2023).

4.4. Forced Peace

I have already stated in the introduction that peace is hard to define and to grasp fully as a concept beyond the negative definition through the absence of violence, war and so on. This also leads to a curious intersection between the models of peace and the topics around silencing and oppression that have been discussed so far in this chapter. This issue, which I am going to elaborate on in the following, is the idea of a supposedly peaceful environment through violent means.

One version of this is authoritarian or illiberal peace, which describes a peaceful societal everyday that is brought about through rigid social structures and authoritarian measures of control. While research has also been conducted on illiberal peace as an alternative to the liberal peace paradigm in international peacebuilding and the role that authoritarian states play as peace brokers (Mitchell 2023; Uesugi and Richmond 2021), this will not be the focal point here. Instead, I will concentrate on what some scholars have called pacification (Baron et al. 2019), which is a supposedly existing peace based on repression, even though the two dimensions are of course connected (Chong 2019, p. 151). States have a tendency to become increasingly authoritarian following civil wars or similar crises, especially after liberal peacebuilding attempts (Lewis et al. 2018, p. 489). While there is a strong presence of police and military forces, rigid laws and surveillance infrastructure (Lewis et al. 2018, pp. 495–500), there is also a significant epistemic dimension to authoritarian peace. Control over discursive and narrative dimensions ensures societal cooperation. To this aim, political opposition and critical civil society are targeted along with media outlets to smother any public critique of the political course, leaving little effective freedom of speech. With the same aim are educational curricula aimed at indoctrination instead of critical thinking, and societal standards more generally are geared towards conformity over individualism. Furthermore, more direct forms of propaganda can be a means to emphasise the supposed peaceful coexistence and to legitimise the repressive state measures (Chong 2019, pp. 159–163; Lewis et al. 2018, pp. 493–495). Of course, this does not actually lead to a peaceful society but merely represses conflicts instead of addressing and transforming them. This also necessitates indefinitely keeping up the authoritarian measures to prevent the re-emergence of the conflict in the societal perception (Lewis et al. 2018, p. 492).

Nevertheless, repressive peace is not necessarily only a condition of authoritarian states. Current debates on post-liberal peace show how even the critical theories and practices of peacebuilding might develop similar dynamics and need to question fundamentally their understanding of peace (Bargués 2020; Lakitsch 2022; Randazzo 2021). Additionally, Achille Mbembe defined the peace in the colony as “war without ends” (Mbembe 2003, p. 23). This colonial peace is indicative of the European law, in which the *jus ad bellum* creates a habit and a right to war whereas the *jus publica* creates a legislative frame for the rights of humans. However, the inhabitants of the colonies are not considered human, meaning that they fall victim to *jus ad bellum* while not being protected by *jus publica*. This creates the ability for the colonisers to fight a never-ending war in the colonies and call it peace because no human, meaning no European, dies. Thus, in the colony, there is no distinction between war and peace; they become the same (Mbembe 2003, pp. 23–25). Brendan Hokowhitu and Tiffany Page (Hokowhitu and Page 2011) built on Mbembe’s conception towards a notion of postcolonial peace as a consequence of the way in which colonial peace is continued in postcolonial times. In the postcolony, the physical occupation has lost its temporary dimension, which was replaced by normalisation of occupation, especially in settler colonies.

With that is a constant epistemological occupation that started during colonisation and has permanently changed the consciousness of the postcolonial subject. The authors referred to Frantz Fanon (Fanon 1961) and Derrida (Derrida 2002) when describing how the supposed peace in the postcolonial state is de facto oppression in which the ability to change is smothered by the ongoing epistemic and physical domination of the former colonies. Postcolonial peace is thus always a repressed struggle and resistance. Postcolonial identity is only accepted in so far as it does not harm the peace and through the process identities are radically changed and reformed to fit the mould of identity shaped by and through resistance. The authors thus called for the creation of new postcolonial and indigenous identities that are neither defined in opposition to the colonisers nor a recall of supposed pre-colonial identities but instead new processual identities that account for past experiences and future perspectives (Hokowhitu and Page 2011). This leaves unanswered the question of whether such a process would also allow for a new notion of decolonial peace that is no longer based on epistemic oppression. I will consider this issue in the following chapter.

5. Knowledges as Resistance

In this dissertation, I have so far described several connections between knowledge and Peace and Conflict Studies. These connections exist on several levels. The more obvious ones are the role that knowledge plays in conflict through discursive negotiations of realities and opinions. Here, the question of which narratives gain prominence can have a direct impact on the behaviour of conflict parties and can be a relevant factor in the development of a conflict towards escalation or transformation.

However, there are also less obvious ways in which knowledge is relevant to peace and conflict. Underlying power dynamics, hegemonic systems and structural forms of violence are important topics of Peace and Conflict Studies and play a part both in violent conflict and during times of supposed peace. The epistemic dimension that plays into this has so far been given limited attention despite its clear relevance. Particularly in relation to hegemonic and oppressive systems, knowledge is important. Knowledge production is influenced by pre-set assumptions regarding what is considered knowledge and who is capable of creating knowledge. In addition, what knowledge is seen as valuable and which knowers are deemed capable and trustworthy have a direct influence on societal processes but are also themselves a consequence of the existing epistemic oppression.

Hence, particularly if we see Peace and Conflict Studies as a decidedly normative discipline not only in the analysis of conflicts for furthering our conflict management abilities but also in studying peace in order to move towards positive peace, matters of epistemic oppression are in fact a core topic of Peace and Conflict Studies. After focussing on the issue and its critique for the majority of this dissertation so far, I would thus like to use the final chapter as a starting point for moving beyond the critique. This is, of course, a gigantic endeavour on which I can only touch here and provide some preliminary thoughts and ideas. Nonetheless, it is an important step towards the goal of peace and connecting the epistemic dimension to it. Accordingly, the chapter will take a decolonial position to consider first peace and then knowledge before ending with some concluding thoughts.

5.1. Decolonial Peaces

We struggle to understand peace within the academic Eurocentric canon. However, while there are countless other approaches to peace from different origins, epistemic hegemonies have led to the omnipresence of the Eurocentric one (Wahome and Ng'ang'a 2020). It is the one taught canonically in universities all around the globe and the one at the basis of the peace industrial complex. Nevertheless, particularly with the liberal peace paradigm, we have seen how this universalist approach to peace can cause more harm than good (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2016). Viewing peace from a decolonial standpoint allows us to move beyond these epistemic

hegemonies and look for alternative notions of peace that combine traditional and local diverse conceptions of peace with critical perspectives on contemporary global challenges and an understanding of the implied power dynamics (Fry and Miklikowska 2012; Ramos Muslera 2021; Stavrevska et al. 2022; Walker 2022, p. 43).

The struggle here starts with the still-dominant understanding that there is, in fact, a universal notion of peace and that the global North happens to know it. This is part of but also enforces the typical dynamic of the North, supposedly and by its own assessment bringing peace to the South, often with an evolutionist logic of developmentalism (Jabri 2016, p. 154). However, as we have already established, the global North is not even that clear on what peace actually means, so let us move on to the first part of the assumption, namely the premise of a universal and factual understanding of peace. As Eurocentric peace often turns into violence and oppression in the (post)colony and, to some degree, at home, a different peace is necessary in this context. Five conceptual frameworks of decolonial peace will briefly be addressed in the following.

A common denominator of many decolonial approaches to peace is that they are less static than the Eurocentric one. This can take different forms, such as peace as a temporal effect of the encounter of individuals or groups (Cruz 2021, p. 287). On a similar note, peace can be understood as processual. In this understanding, peace is not a final goal to reach and then have an achieved state but instead is a constantly changing and adaptive part of living (Fontan 2012, pp. 42–43). This necessarily renders any kind of peacebuilding toolbox useless as there is no fixed universal peace to achieve. The process of making peace changes with the peace and becomes the peace itself, a temporal and situational peace (Walker 2022, p. 45).

Another version of decolonial peace features peace as either less or not at all based on logic. This approach can take different forms, such as the connection of empathetic and sensory approaches to peace with more logic-focussed ones, to allow for more holistic approaches. It may also include approaching peace through different forms of expression beyond scientific text, for example through different forms of written, visual and performance art and music (Fontan 2012, pp. 127–133). This also includes an awareness of the embodied character of peace and the relevance of bodies for peace making as an emancipatory act (Dijkema et al. 2024, pp. 13–15). This can then culminate in the concept of *cuerpo-territorio*, in which the connection between bodies and the world around us and nature becomes theorised (Zaragocin and Caretta 2021). Especially when decolonial approaches draw from indigenous peaces they tend to bridge the human–nature binary and extend understandings of peace beyond the human world (Brigg and Walker 2016, pp. 261–263; Walker 2022, pp. 43–45).

The third conception understands peace as a shared project. Following this approach, peace is described as iterative (Cormier 2020, p. 355) or dialogical (Mesa-Vélez 2019). In such an approach, peace becomes a social interaction and a shared endeavour that necessitates negotiation, listening and care. It makes peace a participatory process on eye level, in which success is only

possible through communication and interaction. As such, the outcome is then also a communal achievement (Fontan 2012, pp. 162–165; Walker 2022, p. 45).

There is also an understanding of peace as immanent. Peace already exists in the world and in the local contexts in which we tend to see conflict, so it is not about creating a new peace but involves fostering the existing one (Björkdahl 2024; Fontan 2012, pp. 59–62). This is connected to notions of everyday peace, which also emphasise existing and vernacular practices of peace. The everyday is also an important dimension of sense making for individuals and thus a formative context in which we approach peace. Through everyday practices of peace, resistance and solidarity, community is shaped and colonial hierarchies are overcome (Day et al. 2023, pp. 9–10; Sajed and Seidel 2023).

Finally, another binary, one of the most central ones to Peace and Conflict Studies, which has been normalised through Eurocentric universalism, needs to be addressed. This is the binary of peace and conflict. We tend to assume that they are opposites and that to make peace means to resolve conflict. While the notion of constructive conflict is neither new nor exclusive to the realm of decolonial thought (Björkdahl 2024, pp. 54–55; Kriesberg 2015), the resolution of the binary gives the approach a different spin. As I addressed in chapter 4, peace can allow or even create violence. At the same time, conflict can promote equality and peace as an important mechanism of societal control and change (Fontan 2012, pp. 67–69). In this understanding, decolonial peace is, in fact, a form of conflict.

Therefore, to sum up, decolonial peaces can be processual, dialogical, immanent and many other things. The decolonial project, particularly when it reaches beyond critique, really is very much in the making right now, with more versions of peace likely to be proposed in the future. More importantly, they can exist all at once without one concept raising any hegemonic or universalist claim over another. This simultaneity will also be the focus of the next chapter.

5.2. Pluriversalising Knowledges

Different from Peace and Conflict Studies, knowledge is a central topic in decolonial thought. Here, the coloniality of knowledge describes the epistemic oppression of knowledges from the global South, which was first established during colonialism and has since prevailed (Go 2023, pp. 281–282; Heleta 2016). It is based on the universal claim of Eurocentric knowledge that has existed since the Enlightenment and brought with it a tradition of thinking in opposites and binaries. As a consequence, the world has since been split into a binary logic of right/wrong, male/female and the West and the Rest (Grosfoguel 2002; Hall 2018; Quijano 2007). With this comes a number of consequences, such as the degradation of other knowledges to the realm of superstition, belief and, if romanticised, indigenous wisdom (Mignolo 2009; Reiter 2018, p. 3). To counter this epistemic oppression in the wake of coloniality, there is a clear need for a different approach to knowledge. It is necessary to decentre or provincialise Eurocentric knowledge, not

to eliminate it but to take away its hegemonic position, and to give space to various different kinds of knowledges (Bhambra et al. 2020, pp. 64–65; Dussel 2013, p. 24; Go 2023; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020, pp. 150–154; Stojnić 2023, p. 109). A decolonial suggestion here is pluriversality.

Pluriversality describes a concept that has origins typically linked to the Zapatista movement and to Enrique Dussel but that was thoroughly established by Walter Mignolo (Mignolo 2018). In this regard, the Zapatistas established the call for a "world in which many worlds fit" as one of their key goals, hence demanding the ability for people to live in mutual respect and according to their own lifeworld and beliefs (Shenker 2012, p. 433). Dussel, apparently following the invention of the term by Franz Hinkelammer (Mignolo 2018, p. ix), conceptualised the pluriverse as the next global age in which cultures globally no longer find themselves oppressed by one hegemonic universalist culture but instead exist next to each other and in a dialogical exchange that allows people to connect through similarities and distinguish themselves through differences (Dussel 2013, pp. 24–27). This requires an epistemological shift concerning the purpose and capabilities of an individual epistemology. To make this point clear, Raewyn Connell distinguished three types of knowledge systems. The first describes the one that is criticised as a universalist and hegemonic epistemology that oppresses others. The second is what she called "mosaic epistemology" (Connell 2021, p. 349), with different types of knowledges considered equal and able to sit respectfully next to each other. Nevertheless, she emphasised that even such an approach is not sufficient. Instead, we need what Connell called a "solidarity-based epistemology" (Connell 2021, p. 350), which builds on the mosaic epistemology but extends beyond it into an appreciative dialogue between the epistemologies that can inspire one another and thus potentially evoke shared change through cooperation (Connell 2021, pp. 349–350).

This requires knowledges to be understood as context specific. As knowers, we are required not to cling dogmatically to the epistemologies that we were taught but to be open to exchange and dialogue. This also allows us not to drift into cultural relativism, but instead our own epistemology provides us with a framework against which to assess other knowledges (Reiter 2018, p. 2). Pluriversality in this sense is not just about building epistemic resistance to the contemporary system of epistemic oppression by pluriversalising knowledges and thus taking space and in the process dissolving the current epistemic hegemony. This is the first step. The next is to build a new global system of simultaneity and respect but also of dialogue and cooperation (Chimakonam 2017; Hall and Tandon 2017). This step and the suggestion of pluriversality are so exciting because they allow decolonial thought to move beyond critique into the realm of creation and actual change. It is thus different from conceptions of hybridity (Bhabha 1994; Werbner 1997) through its affirmative stance on difference (Cusicanqui 2012, pp. 105–107). Many scholars have contributed to this project by thinking up pluriversal futures and showing the applicability of pluriversality as a framework in different contexts.

To give a few examples, Arturo Escobar (2022) and Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) imagined the university of the future. Escobar thought of it as a place not only of knowledge production but also of healing through the realisation of the interconnectedness of everything on this planet. As such, our perspective on the world around us and how to treat it is fundamentally changed, and it allows people to be educated about their responsibility for the living and non-living world around them (Escobar 2022, pp. 194–198). Ndlovu-Gatsheni described a place of accessibility and anchored difference (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021, p. 891). Similarly, when applied to the realm of ethics, pluriversality suggests that we might need to abandon universal notions of good and replace them with at times challenging processes. This makes it apparent that the pluriverse is in fact not some kind of utopia but a place where the absence of a universal answer will make it far more complex to negotiate a coexistence in which beliefs and values might not be compatible (Hutchings 2019, pp. 120–124). As resistance, it allows also for the global connection of groups and individuals with similar ideas and struggles to come together over their shared issue while retaining their difference (Dunford 2020, pp. 784–787).

I have applied this logic of having several knowledges stand next to each other and enter into an exchange to the concept of cosmopolitanism (Merkle 2024c). My approach here has shown how, by stripping cosmopolitanism of its universalist aspiration and Eurocentric situatedness, cosmopolitan concepts from all over the globe can enter into a conversation. This does not lead to a new universal cosmopolitanism but instead to a space for local appropriation in which similarities can provide connections. This is particularly relevant to Peace and Conflict Studies and its application through conflict resolution, in which Eurocentric cosmopolitanisms can create severe harm.

The importance of pluriversality for the fields of practice and research on peace and conflict has already been stressed by other researchers. This includes the call for pluriversal peaces (Cruz 2021, p. 285; FitzGerald 2021), as attempted in the previous chapter, but also requests to re-evaluate Peace and Conflict Studies as a discipline and to take a closer look at the paradigms that it works with, such as its relation to justice and human rights (Azarmandi 2023, pp. 10–12), and to think beyond them (Carvalho et al. 2011; Chipato and Chandler 2023) .

5.3. Knowing Peace – Final Thoughts

According to Pascah Mungwini, the issue of knowledge is necessarily an ethical one as it “is closely connected to the question of what it means to be human” (Mungwini 2017, p. 15). As such, the decolonial endeavour towards knowledge both in its critique and in its attempts to create alternatives is an endeavour of ethics and politics of equity. Its research extends beyond the sphere of analysis into matters of social change (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018, pp. 243–255).

This is an uncomfortable space to enter as a European researcher at a European university (Eriksen 2022). One of my papers in particular (Merkle 2023) addresses the challenges that one grapples

with when trying to be an ally, to support and not to take up too much space while at the same time trying to adhere to the rigid structures of academia at least to a certain degree. What makes this space so uncomfortable is the awareness of the limited space that exists and the worry about perpetuating the very system that one criticises. Nevertheless, while I believe that the global South does not need us (Fontan 2012, pp. 122–124; Mignolo 2007), the re-centring of Eurocentric academia as a local epistemology of the global North will very likely need the cooperation of researchers from the global North. This is where I would like to situate this project. There are large parts of decoloniality that are not my place and that I should not take over (Altschul 2022; Orellana Matute 2021). My biography as well as my socialisation and education place me too firmly in the global North. However, there is a European part to play in building a pluriversal academia. A decolonial project does not mean erasing Eurocentric knowledge but instead making it one form amongst many. It is a dialogical project, but a prerequisite for this dialogue is for the global North to take a step back (Bhambra 2021, pp. 85–86; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020, pp. 143–145).

Peace and Conflict Studies are a good place to start this endeavour as they are probably academia at its worst and at its best at the same time (Bräuchler 2018). The field by definition has a tendency to think and act globally. It has and still is perpetuating global hegemonies when it comes to research on peace and conflict but also to the legitimisation of epistemologically, structurally and physically violent practices of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. At the same time, Peace and Conflict Studies are a discipline with a tradition of critique and subversive thinking, not least due to its close ties with critical social movements (Krause 2019). This makes the field open to diverse voices and gives hope that it will be able to take seriously and address critiques from the decolonial perspective in the future. This is where I want my research to make a contribution. In this dissertation, I have examined different dimensions of knowledge and epistemic oppression, including the accessibility of knowledge in different social contexts, the power dynamics in knowledge production and the practices and mindsets of domination in conflict resolution. On all levels, I have also considered possible means of resistance, for example through critical peace education, academic practices of non-hegemonic research and pluriversalising mindsets and values in the field. All those perspectives show that knowledge and the way in which it is viewed, treated and communicated play significant roles in the establishment of decolonial peace.

This is why, through this project, I make the case for a more prominent inclusion of knowledge as a central topic in Peace and Conflict Studies. To this aim, this dissertation first and foremost provides contributions as theoretical advancements but also includes empirical examples that add to the different issues and methodological approaches that fall broadly into the spectrum of collaboration in connecting different fields and theoretical approaches.

This attempt at connection should be further elaborated in future research projects. In particular, feminist research can provide an important link with decolonial thought that could not be

addressed here. This perspective would need further exploration, as some recent studies on the potential for a connection between pluriversality and intersectionality have indicated (Masquelier 2022, 2023).

Another direction that should gain more attention in the future and in particular become normalised beyond the narrow audience of decolonial research is the concept of pluriversality, which I addressed in the previous chapter. As this paradigm is best realised through the normalisation of its application, more research keeping this in mind is necessary, and Peace and Conflict Studies offer ample opportunities to achieve this and to explore further, for example, how it can be helpful in conflict resolution. In particular, approaches that already work on establishing the coexistence of different narratives, such as agonistic peace (Strömbom and Bramsen 2022), might profit from that. This can also provide an important opportunity to connect the theoretical level more deeply with empirical research on conflicts and their aftermaths.

My dissertation provides groundwork for these endeavours by situating knowledge as a topic clearly within Peace and Conflict Studies, not just as an educational approach but as an important dimension of decolonial peace and a means of resistance to structural violence and epistemic oppression.

6. Bibliography

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7. Appendix

7.1. Paper 1: Finding Peace in a Thought Experiment

Finding Peace in a Thought Experiment?

Eidetic Variations on Knowledge Ownership as a Perspective in Peace Education

1. INTRODUCTION

I am convinced that knowledge has value in itself, and I hear myself make that point in defence of academia against the neoliberalisation and consequential commodification of knowledge in the university. I am also acutely aware of the fact that the knowledge I am defending is a very specific one, informed by a Eurocentric understanding of knowledge – and science – that stands in the tradition of coloniality/modernity (Quijano, 2007). This is not to say this knowledge is false or worthless but that it is knowledge of one epistemology, and yet, due to epistemic hegemony in the tradition of European colonialism, it is omnipresent and largely uncontested.

Such epistemic hegemonies and power dynamics related to knowledge are common and inform our day-to-day lives, including what we know to be true, what our children learn in school, what is discussed at university, what the daily news reports on, and who we consider to be smart. All of those and many more instances are determined by power relations concerning knowledge. Political elections are decided by how competent politicians seem to certain demographics. Practical knowledge can turn into a job opportunity, but only if it is certified by the right institution. Even how we learn to learn is structured by it.

The aim of this paper is to examine such dimensions of power and knowledge by taking a closer look at different ownership structures of knowledge. In ownership lies power because it allows for control over content and distribution. Debates around commodification and neoliberal attempts to treat knowledge as a product are central to the connection between knowledge and power. In quantifying knowledge and applying a market logic to it, knowledge is in danger of losing its ability of sense-making (McKenna, 2022). The commodification of knowledge and culture is also a central theme of critical theory towards contemporary societies. It is concerned with the hegemonic structures that

are consequently used to create systems of domination (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2016 [1969], pp. 128–176). Thus, I will take a closer look at different forms of knowledge ownership and how it influences who can know what. Thereby, a necessary connection between epistemic oppression and knowledge ownership becomes apparent.

I use Husserl's method of eidetic variation to create scenarios of how ownership structures could change and then think through potential consequences. Through that approach, different factors and changes in the relation between knowledge and power can be identified. I describe three variations of knowledge ownership: one where knowledge is owned by individual persons, one where it is owned by groups or communities, and one where it is owned by all.

The oppressive potential of different dimensions of power is then discussed, which is countered with lessons from peace education to account for the specific necessities of each variation.

In doing so, I answer the question, how can peace education curricula adapt to account for different knowledge ownership structures in society and the according shifts in power dynamics?

The contribution of the paper is twofold. By introducing a method from philosophy into social science, eidetic variation allows for a systematic evaluation of the shifts in the relation of knowledge and power through different types of knowledge ownership. Additionally, it contributes to the field of Peace and Conflict Studies by transferring these insights into practical recommendations on educational approaches for peace and adding to the theorisation of the field.

2. EIDETIC VARIATIONS

My method is based on Husserl's eidetic variation. The phenomenological method is a purely thought-based approach in which a certain topic or object is imagined in a number of different variations to determine how it changes with said variations. The aim of the experiment is to find the essence (*Wesen*) of a phenomenon. The variations can be based in pure imagination or experience, and through an ideational process, an a priori truth is to be discovered (Belt, 2022, pp. 406–407).

In my approach to eidetic variation, I use the method as Husserl intended; however, due to ontological differences, I changed the metatheoretical contextualisation for my paper. My first difficulty lies in the claim to the validity of phenomenological philosophy that assumes essential truths can be found through their approaches (Husserl, 1995 [1913], pp. 10–16). As I am writing this paper from a decolonial and, thus, radically constructivist point of view, I seek no such thing. In addition, I understand the objects of my investigation – knowledge and power – to be relative in nature and to only manifest through human (inter)action.

With his approach of deconstruction, Derrida initially challenged Husserl's phenomenological goal to find the essence of things, stating that "the thing itself, always escapes" (Derrida, 1973, p. 104). This leads to a different understanding of what eidetic variations are, leaving them dependent on the subjective perspective of the researcher and searching no longer for truths. This does, however, not invalidate the method as the goal of its application shifts with the change of premise and epistemology. Thus, I do not seek to find an essence of either concept but instead aim to understand the dynamics of their interplay and how these dynamics then manifest in structures of marginalisation *(Korrelation)*.

To do so, I will focus on three variations that I have pre-set as the possible ideal types of knowledge ownership: the knowledge of one, the knowledge of some (as a community), and the knowledge of all. Each of those variations will be explored using both imaginary and empirical notions. To Husserl, empirical and eidetic science constitute two entirely separate types of research. He specifically states the inherently different nature of empirical and eidetic truths by describing the former as "accidental" and only valid experientially (Husserl, 1995 [1952], pp. 47–49). Eidetic science goes beyond that as a priori truths that can be discovered through structured methods of thought. This includes transcending one's individual perspective (Husserl, 1995 [1913], pp. 20–22). Such is not an option from a constructivist vantage point and is replaced with an awareness of subjectivity. Michel Foucault notes how the matter of true and false is a means of discursive power through exclusion. It is, thus, a political process, and, accordingly, the outside of the discourse is not objectively false but

merely excluded and labelled as such (Foucault, 1971). This step escapes Husserl. Hence, the inclusion of literature allows me to expand my own imagination and enrich the included perspectives. In doing so, I will also be able to move back and forth between different levels of abstraction, allowing me to take into consideration the general and broad as well as the specific and concrete. This is in line with Alfred Schütz, who emphasises the importance of everyday interpretations of the world we experience as primary forms of experience from which others deviate and which are central to what we perceive as real. It is, thus, the starting and end point for scientific interpretations as the one done in this paper (Schütz, 1945, pp. 533–555).

Despite these changes, Husserl's eidetic variation is still a valuable approach to this paper. It provides a structured path to explore a complex and hard-to-grasp dynamic and allows for the systematisation of possibilities and limitations. I also argue that my approach is in accordance with the initial rendering of the method. While there is a difference in the understanding of truth and the abilities of the method, the core belief that, by finding variations of a theme and thoroughly thinking them through, essential features of a phenomenon can be discovered has not changed. The understanding that phenomena are constructed does not lead to the conclusion that they are arbitrary, and neither are their consequences. I am still looking for the essence of the discussed dynamics.

I structure my approach along three variations that cover the possible spectrum of who can own existing knowledge. They are, thus, established not as empirical but as transcendental categories. Knowledge can be owned by one, by some and by all. Individual ownership is the most self-explanatory of the categories. Here, knowledge of some will be interpreted as knowledge owned by a community or group. It is imaginable that knowledge is owned by some who are not part of one group, but I argue that we are then talking about a version of individual ownership. Finally, ownership by all means free access to knowledge by all, not implying that everyone knows everything. This variation is similar to ownership by none because they do not differ in practice and will, thus, be understood as one variation. I explore each of these variations following the same

sequence of categories to ensure comparability. They will be developed in the next section based on existing literature on knowledge and power to represent recurring themes in the debates.

This method allows for a systematisation of the relation between knowledge and power along the lines of ownership, which is not found in the relevant literature. This poses an advantage through its comprehensive approach and by allowing us to see patterns, themes and deviations. As such, eidetic variation as a method has much to give to social science in general despite its oversight so far.

3. KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

Similar to Foucault, I am of the opinion that power and knowledge cannot be treated as separate (Foucault, 1980, pp. 51–52). I will, thus, not go beyond a brief definition of each individual concept before delving into their connections.

I define knowledge simply as anything a person can know. I will explicitly not follow the Eurocentric distinction of factual and orientation knowledge to avoid already falling into the trap of establishing power dimensions. Instead, the knowledges of this paper include knowledge through experiences, through learning and education, and knowledge that has been passed on. I also understand knowledge as being constructed, situated and relational. It is, thus, dependent on the context of the knower and will change with them or when being passed on to a different knower (Jöns et al., 2017, p. 9).

Power is another concept of which a wide array of theorisations exists. Generally speaking, power can be exerted through actors, both individuals and groups, and systems (Meusburger, 2015, p. 29). Foucault highlights how both versions are part of a system of domination in which power can circulate in all directions but is steered through disciplinary structures in an exploitative way. An industrialised system of power and domination has established global hierarchies that exploit local structures towards the same system (Foucault, 1980, pp. 98–102). This perspective highlights the fact

that power is a constructed and relational concept. While people can generally access power, outcomes are determined by structural dimensions and potential support through other actors.

3.1. The Relation of Knowledge and Power

Although power and knowledge do not necessarily intersect, there is a strong relationship between both concepts. Stehr describes knowledge as the capacity for action and a means to enhance agency (Stehr, 2015, pp. 78–79). Agency, on the other hand, is the ability to determine one's own actions. The concept is particularly related to situations where the individual or group is marginalised or oppressed and describes their potential to create a favourable situation. We, thus, talk about power in the ability to take action. Agency can, however, be hampered by power structures that operate against it (Melber, 2017). Knowledge can enable action through a better understanding of contexts, options for action and potential outcomes and consequences. Lack of knowledge thereof can lead to an inability to act or lower chances of success. Those in power tend to accumulate and gatekeep knowledge to enhance their options and as a means of control. This relates to Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which describes the power held over people through control of knowledge and through ideology (Cox, 1983, pp. 163–164; Gramsci, 1971, pp. 245–246). Thus, knowledge can be a tool to enhance or keep but also to deteriorate power.

There are also power dynamics within knowledge production. Power can help to legitimise or subvert knowledge. In particular, institutions of education, knowledge production, and knowledge accumulation exercise power in this regard. Those dimensions include but are not limited to restrictions on access to knowledge, choices around the inclusion of knowledge and emphasis on appropriate ways to convey and preserve knowledge (Ndofirepi & Gwaravanda, 2019, pp. 1–2). Finally, there is a person-specific dimension. This includes authority attributed to individuals, which can make a specific opinion seem legitimate or intelligent. On the flip side, personal attributes tied to stereotypes can lead to the disregard of someone's knowledge (Coady, 2010, pp. 109–110).

The literature on epistemic injustice debates such types of structural discrimination based on categories such as age, race, religion, or gender and how they intersect with access to education and knowledge, as well as how believable a person is considered to be. They show how structural discrimination influences how someone knows, is known and is considered knowledgeable (Byskov, 2021). It emphasises the relevance of the context in which the relationship between knowledge and power exists, which is central to this paper.

The relation between power and knowledge exists on a societal spectrum of absolute control to absolute freedom. I will not address the extreme of control as it would allow knowledge only as ideology. I will, however, include the extreme of freedom over the course of all three variations. As the political theory that concerns itself with it, I will introduce anarchism. Different versions of anarchism put varying emphasis on individual and social forms of freedom, which allows the concept to be relevant and discussed in different dimensions across all three variations. They also give attention to the role ownership plays and how it is connected to oppression and power (Proudhon, 2007 [1840] and thereby reproduce the categories of ownership along which the variations are created.

3.2. Knowledge of Resistance and Peace Education

Another important dimension of power is hegemonic structures and practices, their realisations through knowledge, and how to counter them. With resistance to epistemic hegemony, it makes sense to switch perspective towards an empowering or subversive notion because oppression is not synonymous with powerlessness.

It is easy to fall into a black-and-white perspective of the oppressor and the oppressed, attributing all the power to one side and none to the other. This is an under-complex perspective that does not acknowledge the many grey areas. For one, the line between oppressor and oppressed is often blurred with people shifting between different roles, holding different positions from different

vantage points or trying to mediate (Wynne, 2020, pp. 342–345). Through sharp distinctions, we also solidify the structures of oppression with little room to change. This can lead to a vilification of those trying to get by and to absolution of the harm caused from a position of marginality. Most importantly, it leads to the victimisation of the oppressed by negating their agency and, thus, rendering them helpless (Jugov & Ypi, 2019, p. 5). In doing so, we fall into a neoliberal trap, leaving the fault for a structural problem with individuals. Additionally, structures of domination can be perpetuated through repetitive actions of affirmation. That includes conscious acts of those in power, the negation of oppression by those who passively profit and the endurance of discrimination by those oppressed (Jugov & Ypi, 2019, p. 5).

When we acknowledge that everyone has certain degrees of power, even when being oppressed, this begs the question of what consequences we can draw. While it is easy to conclude that the oppressor bears the responsibility to alter their behaviour and contribute to structural change, the question is more complicated for the oppressed. By assuming that lack of resistance affirms the oppressive system and at the same time attributing agency to the oppressed, the question of a responsibility to resist arises (Jugov & Ypi, 2019, p. 3). An important point here is the issue of epistemic opacity. This term describes the lack of context to recognise or interpret the oppression one experiences. This can range from complete nonrecognition of discrimination to individualistic frames that fail to acknowledge its structural dimension (Jugov & Ypi, 2019, pp. 13–17).

Paulo Freire was one of the first to recognise in his pedagogy of the oppressed the necessity of liberation of the consciousness. He describes how an oppressed individual, when liberated, will typically become an oppressor themself. This is due to a lack of consciousness of the structural dimension but also because of a learned way of thinking (Freire, 2005 [1970], pp. 43–49). It is, thus, necessary to liberate not only the body but also the mind (Tarwater, 2016). This allows us to think in structures of humanity and solidarity and takes away the fear of freedom common to the oppressed mind (Freire, 2005 [1970], pp. 46–47).

It is, thus, important to learn subversive thinking and to unlearn system-affirming education. Unfortunately, structures of marginalisation tend to work in a way where they can even be unconsciously reinforced as given or natural (Jugov & Ypi, 2019, pp. 4–6). To break out of those self-affirming epistemic structures necessitates conscious acts of epistemic subversion.

Peace education is one pedagogical track that aims to contribute to peaceful coexistence through education. This includes a certain degree of content-based education, such as knowledge on peace and conflict, communication styles and processual knowledge towards peace. However, the more prominent part of peace education focuses on educating participants towards being responsible society members, collaborative learning, hope-based imagination, appreciation of diversity and critical thinking (Gould, 2013, pp. 59–60; Shapiro, 2010, pp. 183–189). It is also anti-oppressive and, hence, lends itself very well to the intended perspective of diverse and critical education.

As a type of education that concerns itself so much with knowledge and thinking, it can also profit significantly from the systematic analysis in this paper. To do so, I will focus on the seven Rs Betty Reardon proposes as the seven capacities for peacemaking through peace education: "reflection, responsibility, risk, reconciliation, recovery, reconstruction, and reverence" (Reardon, 2021 (1988), p. 73). The assumption is that successful peace education will enable all seven, and, thus, a lack of one or more of them in the variations calls for an emphasis on the according educational curriculum. In Reardon's influential approach, they are developed through a cyclical process of capacity building and reality confrontation, the latter being a continuous testing of the developed critical skills against real-world experiences in line with the already mentioned development of critical consciousness by Freire. The goal is to focus on the change one wants to implement (Reardon, 2021 (1988), pp. 84–88).

3.3. Building Categories

To operationalise the established themes of knowledge and power, they will be categorised according to their recurring perspectives. Drawing strongly on the research on epistemic injustice allows us to understand the intersections of knowledge and power from the perspective of marginalisation. The two topics that were discussed in that respect are the ones of knowledge and the knower. So, the issue of knowledge and what is recognised and rewarded as valuable knowledge will be the first category. The topic of the knower, who is considered one, and how that recognition is beneficial to the knower will be the second category.

The topic of peace education will provide a third and fourth category. One is the matter of education and the institutionalisation of such, including the presence different knowledges. The fourth and final category addresses subversive knowledge and resistance and will consider the space for critical knowledges.

4. THREE VARIATIONS

Now, the three variations will be addressed by going through the sequence of all four categories to allow for a comparative perspective across different structures of knowledge ownership. The initial theoretical deliberations will each be substituted with relevant empirical examples to diversify viewpoints and to illustrate the abstract initial thoughts with concrete versions of how the theory can play out in the everyday.

4.1. Variation One: Knowledge of One

The first variation is an individualistic society. Knowledge structures are built around the needs of individual people and promote individual success over community. The rights of the individual are a point of focus, as is individual freedom. Strong emphasis is put on knowledge as individual possession. The individual can, thus, choose if and how they allow access to their knowledge.

We can assume that if the ownership of knowledge lies with the individual, so will the judgement on what is considered knowledge or valuable knowledge. This will likely lead to a very diverse understanding of knowledge and a wide variety of existing knowledges. It also leaves the choice of knowledge being passed on with the knower. This might lead to a knowledge economy where knowers turn their knowledge into profit, and people willing to acquire knowledge do so. Interestingly, this power dynamic might go either way and might even change from case to case. It depends on how sought-after specific knowledges are and whether the learner or the owner is in a position of power. This might also lead to a hierarchy of knowledges, with some being considered more valuable following a market logic. On a similar note, social status might be tied to either accumulating a lot or the right type of knowledge.

It might also lead to a society where those wanting to learn are dependent on whether they are deemed worthy by the knower. Reasons for worthiness could be financial means or specific characteristics. This could lead to unequal access to knowledge or, at the very least, make learners dependent on the knower's benevolence. While institutions of knowledge sharing are possible in such a context, they do not immediately spring to mind. If they exist, there is a high chance of them being diverse, leading to different opportunities and pathways for learners to take.

With the existing diversity, anti-oppression knowledge will likely be neither penalised nor encouraged. Empirical experience shows us that capitalist systems tend to commodify their critique (Collins & Rothe, 2017). Otherwise, it will be up to individuals to build structures where their knowledge can be learned and expanded on if they have the means to do so.

A more individualistic approach to knowledge is prevalent in contemporary societies in the Global North. It works well with neoliberal political approaches that are also strongly focused on individual success, limiting communal dimensions of society and commodifying knowledge. Access to knowledge is typically barred and must be bought. At the same time, Olssen (2006) points out how, in neoliberal societies, learning might actually be furthered due to the added value of educated workers and the scarceness that comes with technological advancements. This allows for highly

individualised learning environments along with economic incentives for continuous albeit profit-oriented education (Olssen, 2006, pp. 221–222). Such an effect would counteract the initial assumption that societies based on individual knowledge ownership might have more diverse knowledges. It makes it apparent that a market logic, while not necessarily restricting knowledges would still apply a dynamic of reward and marginalisation based on economic value, leading to a commodification of knowledge (Roberts, 2004). Yet, individuals who possess valuable knowledge can gain both financially and through status from their expertise (Grundmann, 2017, pp. 26–28).

A different take is provided by anarchism. As an individualistic and liberal concept, anarchism leaves responsibilities and choices with the individual. At the same time, different approaches to anarchism put different emphasis on community, and many dismiss property altogether. An approach that might fit is Stirner's version of anarchism, which builds on the premise of an egotistical humanity. His theory of egoism is a radical version of anarchist individualism in which humans unite through their choice to prioritise and free themselves without regard for others. Other versions of individualism are more oriented towards equality through the abolition of domination while keeping market regulation. This would avoid the accumulation of wealth and foster cooperation (Ryley, 2019, pp. 227–231). Mutualist anarchism would fit well as they are less community and more market-oriented than anarcho-communists or anarcho-syndicalists. Mutualism typically applies a logic of reciprocity fitting well within the established framework. Knowledge would be considered a good in reciprocal exchanges, leaving behind the neoliberal capitalist notion while still applying a system of ownership and exchange for mutual benefit (Wilbur, 2019, pp. 213–214). This might also lead to a less self-centred system than the previous ones, with the reciprocal aspect accounting for consensus and care in transactions. It is, hence, individualist but rather compassionate than egotistical.

Individualist and mutualist approaches to anarchist education would certainly be very open and would work against unified school systems or syllabi (Suissa, 2019, pp. 511–514). It remains somewhat unclear, however, how sufficient educational opportunities would be provided. Most likely, they would heavily rely on individual initiatives, with the most radical taking potentially

rejecting formal education entirely (Suissa, 2019, p. 521). Yet, mutualist approaches are concerned with reciprocity and, thus, allow for concepts of learning and knowledge sharing based on the understanding that everyone has the knowledge to contribute (Suissa, 2019, pp. 523–524). This could, for example, be connected to an open conception of cosmopolitanism that also works with a mindset of human connection, collaboration, and appreciation of difference (Merkle, 2024; Vandamme, 2018; Woodward & Skrbiš, 2018).

The tendency of individual ownership structures of knowledge to lead to individualised behaviour and power lying with those who possess knowledge leaves a clear path of action for peace education. Peace education, in that respect, shares many attributes with other types of civic education in that it encourages active participation in society. Concerning the capacities for peacemaking, this would include reflections on the connected existence of humanity and the world as a whole and, as a consequence, to take up responsibility for this world (Reardon, 2021 (1988), pp. 74–75). With that, a sense of community would ideally be built that counteracts the self-centred and egoistical tendencies that might otherwise dominate such a context. Concrete methodologies towards that goal would, for example, entail learning and projects where shared progress is prioritised over individual success (Shapiro, 2010, pp. 182–183).

4.2. Variation Two: Knowledge of Some

The second variation is that of a communitarian approach in which the group is emphasised over the individual but also over other groups and people. Communitarianism can typically be understood as a more particularist version where the individual holds significant agency within the group or a more collectivist version where the group takes precedence over the individual. Both versions would see knowledge ownership with the group, and either all group members or their representatives can access it. Outsiders will not be considered owners, and access might be restricted.

The group would decide on what is considered (valuable) knowledge. This is the most inclusive version of knowledge ownership as it acknowledges how knowledge is not created in a void but is a product of human interaction and builds on previous knowledge. It, thus, cannot be the deed of just one person. It can also strengthen group identity to be responsible for knowledge. There might nonetheless be unequal access to knowledge within the group, and knowledges that do not conform with the group majority might be shunned.

Knowledge that is seen as in possession of the group will likely be kept and passed on in a way structured by the group. This might be more restrictive or less both in access and in openness to change. Roles within the process of accumulating, keeping, teaching and learning group knowledge might also be linked to hierarchies, with either the social status being derived from the role or the role being attributed to social status.

Knowledge of resistance will flourish if it is community knowledge. The existing community will be a structure of support even if the knowledge is penalised by an out-group. A group structure comes rather naturally to a lot of subversive knowledges. As hegemonic structures tend to discriminate against specific groups of people, it makes sense to organise knowledge against the structures along those lines of discrimination. So, even a group that did not exist as a conscious entity previously might develop such by being discriminated against.

Empirical examples of communitarian approaches to knowledge are often twofold and connoted very differently. The first example would be conservative nationalist or local right-wing perspectives that perceive the authenticity of their cultural context as being threatened by changes in their surroundings (Koopmans & Zürn, 2019, pp. 4–6). The second example is indigenous communities that make an effort to preserve and protect knowledges and epistemologies, either from extinction or appropriation (Greenwood & Lindsay, 2019). While the initial intent and, to some degree, even the rhetoric seems similar, they are, of course, vastly different.

Their difference is related to a plethora of power dimensions on the global scale. Considering indigenous knowledge, epistemicide and cultural erasure are scientifically documented phenomena

with political intent and long-term consequences, they need to be contextualised differently than ideas of cultural purity. The absence of non-Eurocentric knowledges and epistemologies from syllabi globally is just one indication of how indigenous knowledges are often not even considered knowledge (Stojnić, 2023, pp. 107–110).

This cannot be said for nationalist conservative contexts. Here, those seemingly trying to preserve their culture are the ones in power. The Eurocentric knowledge is the standard of what is considered knowledge, has become so through violent processes of colonisation and it is not threatened (Connell, 2021). This is not to say that cultural contexts are not changing. This is, however, a normal process of culture and tradition being in constant flux even though they are typically perceived as stable representations of identity and belonging by their members (Williams, 2014, pp. 49–54). Change is, however, not the equivalent of erasure. What is more, the rhetoric used by conservatives is typically one of victimisation but then used against marginalised communities (Marcks & Pawelz, 2022).

Group ownership is, of course, not necessarily tied to the notion of culture and indigeneity. Again, anarchism can provide an interesting context for looking at groups formed as socio-political entities. This includes anarcho-syndicalism and similar concepts that centre organisation around groups (van der Walt, 2019). Typically, such groups will make consensus-based decisions, leading to knowledge being a shared good. We can also assume that the knowledges are rather diverse. It is, however, unclear how much diversity will work without splitting up the group. From an anarchist standpoint, someone moving on to another group and taking knowledge with them would not be a problem, yet it would lead to more homogenous groups.

Still, communitarian knowledges exist to some degree also in less formalised, smaller and situational groups. Here, group knowledge can range from inside jokes that strengthen the identity of a friend group to corporate secrets in a workplace. The value of knowledge might range from reassurance of identity to financial gain. Accordingly, there is also a vast spectrum of how protected knowledge is and how far it is treated as static or developing. Decisions on those issues could range from

consensual to majority decisions. This then determines where they lie on the spectrum of the two other variations being discussed in this paper. What makes them different is the existence of an out-group that might put varying degrees of pressure on the in-group to share or change their knowledge.

These potential intergroup conflicts are another topic for peace education. Again, reflection would be the basis for understanding connections beyond the group. The second relevant capacity would be reconciliation, which in this account describes an awareness of fragmented relationships in the world and the ability to listen and emphasise with different positions. It is not about giving in but about moving on together. The first step here is introspection and then dealing with disagreements in a respectful way that lets everyone keep their human dignity (Reardon, 2021 (1988), pp. 74–77).

4.3. Variation Three: Knowledge of All

The third variation is a cosmopolitan one where all of humankind is considered, and a shared interest of all humans is assumed. In such a scenario, no person or group owns any knowledge, or everyone owns all knowledge. It can, thus, be accessed freely. It is also assumed that knowledge is generally applicable and relevant. This is a necessary condition to allow learning for everyone, regardless of factors like social status. As a consequence, social status would likely be tied less to knowledge. This begs the question, however, of how learning and knowledge production can be encouraged if there is apparently little gain in status or payment from it. This could be solved by having institutions take over that role, ensuring that knowledge is kept and passed on in a structured manner. Institutionalisation will likely end in a rather homogenised structure, which also concerns knowledge. It likely results in a restrictive framing of what (important) knowledge is. So, while in comparison to the other variations, the diversity of knowers will likely increase, the diversity of knowledge might decrease, leaving an omnipresent majority perspective. Minority knowledges will find little space or opportunity and might be completely disregarded or not even categorised as knowledge.

This assumption of objective knowledge that can be known by everyone is typically associated with modern thought from the Global North, where an understanding of knowledge as objective, true and universal is the most prevalent (Quijano, 2007). Accordingly, societies and education in the Global North are built on such assumptions of universal knowledge (Bingham, 2010).

However, assuming the universality of knowledge does not automatically lead to universal accessibility of knowledge which is closely related to a range of demographic factors. Accessible knowledge, particularly during formalised education, is, thus, an important means towards social equality (Baker et al., 2009, pp. 140–168). At the same time, the homogenous structures will streamline education with little space for non-majority knowledge. The task, thus, lies in unlearning the system, affirming knowledge, and changing existing infrastructure towards including other knowledges and in diversifying curricula.

Yet, absolute accessibility to knowledge is something we still rarely see. The internet has provided us with a suitable platform for accessible knowledge, and people use it to provide free and accessible information on most imaginable topics. Yet, formalised and recognised ways of learning are often lacking or expensive. The lack of (quality) control of online knowledge also requires a significant amount of context knowledge necessary to navigate the space. Online conspiracy theories and their following show how easily one can lose perspective (Cinelli et al., 2022). More curated knowledges and knowledges deemed too valuable or profitable will still be held under seal.

Additionally, accessible knowledge is highly dependent on initiatives undertaken by individuals and unpaid labour. This ranges from those producing and facilitating their knowledge and competencies online for free to activists accessing and distributing protected knowledge (O'Loughlin, 2016).

A formalised way to share knowledge in contemporary societies with everyone is certainly the public school system. Here, in theory, knowledge is accessible to children unbeknownst to their background. However, a number of hurdles limit de facto accessibility, and it comes with very strict limits on what is knowledge taught, with geographical and political factors playing a significant role.

To make a final attempt at imagining a society where knowledge belongs to all, we will go back to anarchism. Anarcho-communism, in particular, seems to be a fitting concept here. Starting with the abolition of property, knowledge can subsequently not be treated as a commodity. The similarities between internet-based activism and knowledge accessibility are no coincidence because many activists consider themselves at least intellectually close to anarchism (Goode, 2018). Interestingly, many hacktivists and online activists also share with social anarchism political goals that are informed by a strong sense of justice and a strive for equality (George & Leidner, 2019). This leads to a sense of responsibility to not only provide knowledge but also supply opportunities and structures for access (Suissa, 2019, pp. 511–514).

Of course, the goal would be for the whole community to support diverse knowledges and, thus, that would likely be the focus for peace education to take. Unsurprisingly, this path starts again with the capacity of reflection to create awareness of one's own position and to learn to listen to others in marginalised positions. It also includes the capacity of recovery that more specifically focuses on the recovery and centring of suppressed, marginalised and forgotten knowledges. This is not only to emphasise their usefulness through different and new ideas but also to create awareness for a more holistic version of the human experience (Reardon, 2021 (1988), p. 77).

Table 1

Overview of the Systematic Analysis of Knowledge Ownership Structures

	Knowledge of One	**Knowledge of Some**	**Knowledge of All**
Knowledge	Diverse and expensive	Protected	Homogenous and accessible
Knower	Who can afford it	Members	Who wants to
Education	Individualised and expensive	Exclusive to the group	Formalised and accessible

Resistance	Creating knowledge from scratch	Strength through the group	Unlearning of the majority knowledge
Peace education	Creating community	Building bridges	Valuing diversity

5. Lessons for Peace Education

In this paper, I addressed how different knowledge ownership structures affect their relation with power and how they can be addressed through peace education. To do so, I performed an eidetic variation of three ideal ownership settings. I debated how different approaches towards the ownership of knowledge as an individual, group or universal possession will lead to changes in knowledge infrastructures and accessibility and which consequences the different variations have for the oppressed and for developing subversive knowledge. The theoretical deliberations were substituted with empirical examples to take into consideration likely developments that might not be immediately deducible from the premise. Then, the outcomes were contrasted with insights and challenges from peace education.

It has become clear that all three variations show different aspects of knowledges and learning being supported and hampered. Increasingly individualised ownership over knowledge will allow for diversity of knowledges but might also lead to the commodification and ranking of knowledge. On the other hand, a system that prioritises accessibility to knowledge for all might streamline knowledge and, thus, exclude minority perspectives. Knowledge owned by groups will lead to an insider-outsider dynamic with rigid structures and little room for development. Knowledge will likely be considered something to preserve and not to share. Yet, marginalised groups are also the most feasible structure to promote subversive knowledge as they can build support infrastructures and emphasise the position of the oppressed.

Anarchism has been an interesting addition to all variations with its emphasis on freedom. It has also been a fitting notion due to its conscious dealings with matters of ownership and property. Yet, it has also become apparent how different conceptions of freedom can lead to very different consequences, and it is not immune to power dynamics. It is, thus, important to include a notion of critique and deconstruction to keep a system from falling into its own traps. Here, Saul Newman's notion of postanarchism can provide a relevant vantage point in combining several theoretical schools with anarchist thought to achieve a critical version of anarchism that is up to engaging with contemporary society (Newman, 2011, 2019).

What has become clear over the course of this paper is that there is no system of knowledge governance that would prevent every kind of epistemic oppression. Different structures come with different struggles and are differently prone to fall victim to additional dimensions of. It is, thus, not the goal of this paper to judge one of the variations as better or worse than the other but to develop a systematisation of those dynamics.

This leaves the task of critically checking one's own belief system with everyone and places a special burden on those being oppressed by such systems. For our day-to-day, it also poses an increased responsibility for those of us who work on creating, learning and teaching knowledges. Researchers and educators are in a unique position to unveil and counteract structures of knowledge hegemony and epistemic oppression. Epistemological anarchism might be an interesting direction to look here as it reiterates a similar criticism and makes suggestions towards how institutions of knowledge production and education can oppose these structures (Feyerabend, 1975, 1982; Merkle, 2023). This is certainly no easy task. However, following Freire, the first step is to understand and confront the structures of thought we have been taught (Freire, 2005 [1970], p. 46).

This is the goal of critical peace education. The systematic approach to knowledge and power clearly shows that knowledge ownership plays a significant role in what capacities of peacemaking will most likely be fostered and which tend to be forgotten. Individualised knowledge ownership might lead to an advantage concerning the appreciation of diverse perspectives but would lack capacities for

communal approaches. It can individualise power struggles and overlook systemic dimensions. Universalistic knowledge ownership can lead to strong bonds and the institutionalisation of education but bear the danger of homogenising knowledge, thus marginalising minority perspectives further. Group ownership of knowledge provides strong bonds and backing for especially marginalised perspectives but might create divisions that hinder systemic transformation. In many ways, peace education would, thus, work against the dynamics of society to substitute the existing values with what is needed for a more comprehensive approach. Taking into account what knowledges already exist in a specific context and reacting accordingly is its core ability. This also includes sensitivity towards the power dynamics at play. Peace education, in general, is still under-theorised, particularly concerning critical perspectives. This gap, however, bears the risk of creating more harm than good and endangers the success of educational attempts to peacemaking (Higgins & Novelli, 2020, p. 2). This paper contributes towards a sounder critical theory on peace education by giving a systematic approach to the relation between knowledge and power and relating it to respective necessities in peace education. It is also meant as an appeal towards peace education to pay specific mind to the dimensions of knowledge ownership. Peace education has not remained unaffected by the liberal peace paradigm that dominated Peace and Conflict Studies along with peacebuilding practitioners for a long and formative time in the field. Thus, it also shows a certain tendency towards abstraction, universalisation and one-size-fits-all approaches (Higgins & Novelli, 2020, p. 12). It is, thus, a necessary endeavour to use particularly critical approaches to further the awareness of localised needs and pluriversal approaches. This paper provides one step towards this aspiration by highlighting the relevance of knowledge ownership as one dimension of adapting peace education to different perspectives.

Concerning the systematisation this paper attempts, it works with ideal types of categories. The empirical examples and the pedagogical dimensions in particular, show the interplay between the different forms of ownership. The dynamics described above became clearer through the distinct levels of the thought experiment. Yet, our everyday experience shows mixtures of these ownership

types along with changes between the three levels. This can also be a mode of subversion where critical peace and liberation pedagogy consciously change modes of knowledge ownership through education as forms of sharing and distribution of knowledge. This avenue might also be of interest for further research.

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7.2. Paper 2: Epistemological Anarchism against Epistemic Violence

Lena Merkle

Epistemological Anarchism Against Epistemic Violence? A Rereading of Paul Feyerabend towards the Decolonisation of Academic Knowledge Production

Abstract *This paper aims at a rereading of Paul Feyerabend's later work through the lens of decolonial research and towards the aim of contributing to the debates around epistemic violence. Three of Feyerabend's ideas, namely epistemological anarchism, democratic relativism and the likeness of science and myth, are chosen as essential elements of Feyerabend's critical perspective of scientific hegemony. They are evaluated, against the backdrop of epistemic violence in scientific research, on the levels of the coloniality of knowledge production and concerning the entanglements of science and society and state. The paper concludes that Feyerabend's proposal towards concrete action is promising and could add to the project of decolonisation through a restructuring of academia in the global North.*

Keywords *Feyerabend, epistemological anarchism, democratic relativism, coloniality of knowledge, epistemic violence*

1. Introduction

Paul Feyerabend was no decolonial philosopher. Yet, I argue that his writings are of interest to the topic. Not only does he speak to the debates of coloniality of knowledge and epistemic violence from within academia, but he also proposes consequences to that criticism. I argue that he is a valuable accomplice with decolonial scholarship-activism in his attempt to dismantle academia from within and through his propositions on finding a new understanding of knowledge that values diversity. This does not, however, make him a decolonial scholar, and any attempt to do so would

fall short of decolonial aspirations and standards, and he has yet to become present in the literature on epistemic violence. He is not entirely absent, but references are few, albeit clear in detailing how his criticism speaks to them (Grasswick 2017: 321; Mungwini 2017: 15). The most likely explanation for his absence seems to be the controversial image he has in most scientific communities. Despite his success and academic network, or potentially due to its political situatedness, Feyerabend was already considered in his lifetime a provocative and polarising thinker (Preston 1997: 19f.). This perspective seems to have become consensual, leaving him less featured in contemporary debates than one might expect (Stadler 2014: 47). Yet, his work goes beyond simple provocation into an unafraid, complex and far-reaching criticism of academia and its sacrosanct appearance – all issues that are of relevance when it comes to un/doing epistemic violence.

The terminology concerning epistemic violence is far from clear, with various terms being used in similar ways. Hence, I would like to give an account of how epistemic violence will be defined, but also distinguished from other terms, for the course of this paper. To start with, Miranda Fricker famously defined epistemic injustice as "a wrong done to someone in their capacity as a knower" (2007: 1), emphasising what makes the injustice epistemic. While there are different ways of wronging a knower, they all lead up to the knower being perceived as not having an equal standing on an epistemic level with those wronging them. The wrong is rooted in marginalisation (Nikolaidis 2021: 383), as opposed to epistemic mistakes with no discriminatory intention (Byskov 2021: 120). And while many forms of marginalisation lead to epistemic injustice, this paper's focus lies on marginalisation in relation to coloniality.

When experiences of epistemic injustice happen systematically, following Rachel McKinnon, we can speak of epistemic violence (2016: 442). A.C. Nikolaidis then relates epistemic violence to Iris Young's five faces of oppression, showing how applicable they are to the topic (Nikolaidis 2021: 386). Hence, epistemic violence is here understood as a structural form of epistemic injustice that is a form of epistemic oppression.

This understanding is particularly relevant to decolonial takes on epistemic violence, as it highlights the wilfulness of epistemic violence in the context of coloniality. Here, epistemic violence describes the ongoing violent process of limited access to, partaking in, and distribution of,

knowledge: who can produce relevant knowledge and by what means, and what is considered relevant knowledge in the first place? Following Gayatri Spivak, I understand epistemic violence as a process deeply rooted in the structures of coloniality shaping our perception of the world, and as creating a colonial subject which claims universal knowledge and power, and silences the subaltern Other (1988). The paradigm of rationality was created through enlightenment and has dominated colonial understandings of knowledge throughout modernity. It leaves us with a limited and exclusive understanding of knowledge that privileges Eurocentric, supposedly objective scientific knowledge over other knowledges, which are either completely erased from knowing or treated as inferior (Santos 2014: 118f.).[1] To solidify this assumptions, non-academic and non-Western knowledge is categorised as alternative or spiritual (Mignolo 2019: 235f.), hence making it unfit for any discourse on equal terms with academic knowledge. To be unrecognised as a knower is an act of silencing and exclusion. The epistemic violence perpetrated also robs people of the categories by which they understand themselves and the world (Bhargava 2013: 414). It thereby erases self-certainty and self-confidence, which then leads people towards Eurocentric knowledge as the only option left (Heleta 2016: 4).

This exclusivity is obvious in the academic canon, which not only privileges certain scholars, but punishes those who do not adhere to a Eurocentric style of knowledge production (Bhambra et al. 2018: 4ff.). In this paper, I will thus focus on epistemic violence in the context of academia, though this is not meant to be a limit of where epistemic violence can be found, as it cannot be isolated from other types of violence, but also societal and colonial structures and histories of epistemic violence beyond academia (Brunner 2020: 128). The article thus focuses on one part of a larger systematic practice of epistemic violence with the aim of contributing to the ongoing process of decolonisation. To this aim, I propose a rereading of Feyerabend's work that includes both a critique of scientific method and the hegemony of academia and a proposal to change both.

After briefly introducing Feyerabend, I will give some insight into his writings by highlighting three aspects that might interest the discourse around epistemic violence. These are (a) his takes on myths and academia; (b) the idea of democratic relativism; and (c) his proposal of epistemological anarchism, in order to debate their relevance for the decolonial

discourse and hint at how the above-mentioned concepts can be of interest to decolonial endeavours against epistemic violence by adding a perspective of allyship from within academia.

2. Paul Feyerabend

The Austrian philosopher Feyerabend studied physics (Feyerabend 1995a: 64) before turning to the philosophy of science. During his studies in Vienna, he was part of the Third Vienna Circle and became well-connected with many European philosophers (Stadler 2014: 48ff.). He planned to write his doctoral thesis under Ludwig Wittgenstein's supervision, but, after Wittgenstein's death, went to study with Karl Popper instead (Feyerabend 1995a: 86). Both philosophers were central to his formation, as were Ernst Mach and Thomas Kuhn, though his later career was shaped by strongly differentiating himself from their influence before finding again some common ground with Kuhn and Mach (Stadler 2014: 60ff.). After a few years in Bristol, he went on to Berkeley, where he spent most of his career, though with interruptions and guest positions in various countries (Feyerabend 1995a). The experience in Berkley, particularly the increasingly diverse student community from the 1960s onwards, led to an interesting development in his work. Already critical of research processes, he became more aware of the limited relevance of academic knowledge and of its exclusionary practices and privileged position (Feyerabend 1982: 118f.).

Though not at the centre of the canon, Feyerabend's works are discussed and elaborated on in various contexts, ranging from philosophy to educational science (Niaz 2020). Saul Newman included him in the elaboration of his own concept of postanarchism (Newman 2011: 317f), even though Feyerabend was decidedly not a supporter of political anarchism. But he is connected to the topic through his choice to call his approach an anarchist one and his criticism that even anarchist thinkers, who were quick to dismantle any other power structure, struggled to see the hegemonies of academia (Feyerabend 1975: 32ff, 252). He is therefore an interesting fit for Newman explaining his "critique of the absolutism of scientific knowledge" (Newman 2011: 317). Newman's solution is to bring anarchist thought away from its foundational principles; thereby, it is opened up to criticism and

interpretation. With Michel Foucault, Newman proposes an anti-science that doesn't primarily focus on truth claims and is aware of the hierarchisation of knowledge. This works well with Feyerabend's critique that academia is guided more by a striving for power than by standards of credibility and ethical research (Newman 2019: 84f.).

I argue that Feyerabend's later work in particular, on which I will focus in the following, is as relevant to a decolonial critique of academia as to a (post)anarchist one. Anarchism necessarily has to be anticolonial, as it rejects hegemonic structures. And though postcolonial anarchism is another field with much room for further engagement, it is not elaborated on further, due to this paper's limited scope (Ramnath 2011; White 2005).

2.1 Myth and academia

Much of Feyerabend's writings revolve around the issue of how to make truth claims. Having detached from Popper's falsifiability, Feyerabend also left behind the idea of objective empirical truths in general (1995b: 168ff.). Instead, he understands perceptions and experiences as based on ideological contexts of socialisation (1975: 393).

The central criticism that Feyerabend brings against academia is its status in society. He criticises the blind belief in researchers and the unfounded claim of the exceptionality of their findings. Feyerabend interpreted this constructivist perspective as having fundamental implications for the legitimacy of academic research. In a constructed world, world-making is based on equally valid belief-systems and research can only discover relative answers (1975: 22f.). Not only does this anchor his critique as to what research can and cannot do, but it also led to the above-mentioned rejection of an absolute truth (1975: 261). It also made Feyerabend take issue with the discursive dominance of academia and the superiority claims it tends to make, while often based on unfounded assertions and improper aims (1975: 78f.). He supports his stance by detailing how often research does not follow a proper method. He mentions the research process in which several mutually exclusive theories exist simultaneously; thus, not all of them can be correct (1975: 355, 371). Finally, he criticises the academic industry as a profitable structure that strives for recognition, power, and comfort more than for knowledge and advancement (1975: 271f.).

This leads him to the conclusion that academia and myths have much in common. He explains that both are constructs trying to find heterogeneous systems of explaining the world. They include a ritualised way of behaviour, taboos and doctrines that can hardly be questioned. If we now understand the claim of producing real knowledge, as opposed to other types of myths, religions, worldviews etc., to be in fact an ideological claim, then Feyerabend's conclusion is fitting (1975: 394ff.). This take might seem anachronistic in these times of backlash against researchers, post-truth politics, and religious fundamentalism. Caution is needed in order not to provide more material for the anti-scientific 'Western' movements. At the same time, it is crucial not to dismiss his argument just because it might be abused.

Feyerabend is by no means against research. He does not want to abolish research, but rather the unaccountability and elitism of modern academia. He wants to lift other traditions up, but only tear down academic research as far as it has entered the realm of hubris and blind ideology (Feyerabend 1975: 24). Here, Feyerabend's criticism is close to decolonial discourses. When speaking about the coloniality of knowledge, modern academia is criticised as being based on a "totalizing myth of reason and universality" (Vázquez 2011: 35) that is shaped into an "ideological apparatus" (Castro-Gómez 2019: 220).

The criticism decolonial theories raise is twofold: on the one hand, there is criticism towards modern academia's underlying paradigms. For example, the Eurocentric idea of rationality is considered as just one amongst many concepts by decolonial scholars, allowing instead for ambiguity and fluidity (Bhargava 2013: 415). This only becomes problematic, however, through academia's totalitarian and universal claim to be the only source of knowledge, while treating any other type of knowledge as a belief, which is an inherently violent undertaking. At the same time, the ability to be rational and reasonable is framed as a specific trait of the global North (Ideland 2018: 785ff.). This is not only very colonial by nature, but also exceeds the accomplishments that academia could deservedly claim. As Santos phrases it: "A characteristic feature of our time is […] that modern science belongs to the realm of both ideas and beliefs. Belief in science greatly exceeds anything scientific ideas enable us to accomplish" (2014: 192). This shows how Feyerabend focuses more on the mistakes and

false claims that researchers make, whereas decolonial criticism is stronger regarding the colonising nature of modern science and its limited applicability to experiences outside of the global North.

On the other hand, decolonial criticism stresses the socio-political implications of scientific claims and their complicity and legitimising role in the politics of coloniality, including the erasure of diversity, the classification and ordering of colonial subjects, and the devaluation of othered experiences (Vázquez 2011: 34f.). This support of one political system then led to the support of scientific hegemony, making it apparent how dominance is built not on inherent success but on oppression (Ndofirepi/Gwaravanda 2019:590). This combination of coloniality of power and coloniality of knowledge seems to be lost on Feyerabend. He does address the oppression of other knowledges through the universal claims of academia but makes no explicit references to the political dimension. His awareness of these can at best be assumed by how he proposes a political change as a necessary basis for a shift in science and the diversification of knowledges through his idea of democratic relativism.

Nevertheless, it has become apparent that Feyerabend shares a fundamental criticism of academia with that of the decolonial debate. Both speak to each other and add to the same issue from different perspectives of their situatedness within the coloniality of the world and within academia.

2.2 Democratic relativism

Feyerabend proposes that the dominance of academia in society threatens democracy. He suggests that, in a democratic society, citizens must be able to judge their institutions. When researchers establish themselves as a higher authority regarding knowledge, it is difficult to judge them; they could always say that society simply doesn't understand. Hence, academia is an unchecked institution due to intellectual elitism, which Feyerabend opposes with democratic relativism (1999: 218). The main idea of this concept is that everyone judges the world by standards of their belief systems, Feyerabend calls them traditions, which can be anything from religion to politics and occupation. Yet, one can only judge a context from the perspective of one's own tradition(s). This, however, does not imply that one cannot judge other traditions, and Feyerabend suggests that science should be judged by everyone affected by it (1999: 220f.).

Hence, judgment is not dominance. Feyerabend aims to reduce the academic tradition's dominance over other traditions through a separation of academia and state (1975: 385ff.), thus reducing the unchecked and direct influence of academia on politics. In his opinion, all traditions should be able to exist without interference and without being pressured into compliance. Instead, people should be able to experience different traditions to compare and choose the ones most convincing to them. The unfounded dominance of science prevents such a coexistence of traditions (1999: 224).

Of particular relevance is this perspective in politics, where, for a holistic understanding, different knowledges must be considered. This is especially true since science is informed by specific values which legitimise exploitative or appropriating actions in the name of progress (Castro-Gómez 2019; Lander 2019).

For issues that impact society as a whole, he proposes a democratic negotiation process, where representatives or councils of the involved traditions come together to find solutions (1999: 224). To ensure the ability of people to be part of such processes, Feyerabend raises the issue of education and argues against a solely science-based education. Children growing up with awareness of various knowledges might be capable of more epistemologically complex discussions (Medina 2018: 251). To this end, children should be exposed to many different ways of perceiving the world (Feyerabend 1975: 291f.). At the same time, giving children access to their cultures of origin and associated knowledges is important (Bajaj 2022). Thus, curricula could be influenced by communal knowledges but should also emphasise education that focusses on understanding different perspectives, weighing options and finding one's own way, as many anarchist approaches suggest (Suissa 2004: 75ff.).

Here, too, the connections between Feyerabend's and decolonial ideas become clear. He talks about traditions whereas Boaventura de Sousa Santos uses the terms of knowledge's plurality (2014: 137) and epistemological diversity (2014: 192) to describe very similar phenomena. Additionally, Santos not only identifies local knowledges, but also knowledges along the lines of belonging, identification, and intersectionality (2014: 42). In general, the decolonial debate seems more focused on the big picture, whereas Feyerabend looks at how traditions can be both protected and restricted. This could be an interesting point with which to complement decolonial theory.

Though Feyerabend doesn't frame his criticism of academic hegemony as a critique of coloniality, it is open to such interpretation. While it is important not to give too much praise to Feyerabend, who spoke of the racial and the colonial dimension of research and academia but didn't make it his focus, he writes in such an inclusive fashion of marginalised knowledges and exclusion from academia that a connection can be made. His concept of a democratic process for different traditions' interaction is, again, not foreign to decolonial texts. Santos speaks of criteria for diversity of knowledge that must be politically negotiated through "radical and intercultural democratic processes" (2014: 175) and stresses the room democracy has for diversity and difference (2014: 181) while Walter Mignolo mentions the "democratic imaginaries" (2000: 24) that can arise through social movements in the decolonial project.

Admittedly, both are also critical of democracy, underscoring how it is one of the liberal faces of the global North's hegemonic endeavours (Santos 2014: 182) and that local appropriation is necessary to make democracy a viable concept for decolonial imaginaries (Mignolo 2000: 319). This nuance is not to be found in Feyerabend's writings. Yet, his understanding of democracy as portrayed in his works is one quite different from current political systems, and has, in its claims to autonomy of traditions and ideas similar to council structures, interesting notions of anarchist organisation that might be compatible with the mentioned decolonial notions, which remain rather vague in their understanding of democracy.

2.3. 'Anything goes' and epistemological anarchism

Feyerabend particularly criticises research methods. In his writings, he dismisses a strict epistemology that prescribes research definitive rules or universal methods. He again sets himself apart from the influences in his early career by making it clear how little he considers universal methodological rules to be substantial (1995b: 168ff.). He also says that research does not follow the high standards of epistemological theory. Instead, it relies far more on guesswork, chance, and concealed insecurities than researchers would care to admit. Hence, the existing methods cannot be sufficiently convincing (1975: 249). And, finally, he argues that when trying to find something truly new it is necessary to go beyond the tested ways. Rules are constricting, in that they keep researchers from making

discoveries, because they were developed for contexts which were already known (1975: 35, 232, 247ff.). He gives historical examples, concluding that ground-breaking research has often happened due to a disregard of established methodology and that following a rigid methodology was only ever a narrative told by researchers. (1975: 21ff.). This translates well into decolonial thought, which is about centring ways of knowing that cannot be grasped by research methodologies.

Feyerabend concludes that, methodologically, 'anything goes'. A theory will be full of unclarities when it is first thought up, and remains so until it has been thought through or until convincing empirical explanations have been found. It is usually unclear whether a new theory will be dismissed or evolve into an established theory. When we initially restrict our own thinking, we might not include promising perspectives or might even never come to think of them. (1975: 42ff.).

The principle behind 'anything goes', which Feyerabend terms epistemological anarchism, is not a methodology, but rather a plea for an open approach to research and for pluralism, leaving room to follow different paths without concern for their success. He emphasises the relevance of comparison in order to grasp new ideas and advocates for understanding that nothing is complete, as every methodology is limited (1975: 48ff.).

An anarchist approach to epistemology is promising, in that it is also inherently critical regarding the academic power structures (Newman 2011: 317). Decolonial thought doesn't typically concern itself with Western academia, but focuses instead on amplifying and empowering knowledges that have been marginalised and with developing new epistemologies. It is central to delink those attempts from science (Mignolo 2009: 160). The hegemonic nature of academia doesn't allow for the existence of genuinely different knowledges. Hence, any try at reinforcing them must necessarily happen outside of academia.

Though there has been some awareness of indigenous knowledges across disciplines, this tends to be a minority position and also face significant scrutiny as regards their potential for orientalist romanticisation and knowledge extractivism (Mignolo 2000: 45; Santos 2014: 123). Feyerabend gives examples of indigenous knowledges and how they have been treated by researchers in his writings (Feyerabend 1975: 78f.), but makes no explicit note as to how they should be included in academia in a non-extractivist

way. The likely reason here is that, while he was aware of their marginalised position, he would have been unaware of the issue of extractivism and appropriation.

Yet, both Feyerabend and many decolonial writers agree that academic research is limiting and exclusionary (Santos 2014: 15,19). While Feyerabend states that this is limiting progress, Mignolo points out how it particularly limits people and knowledges from the global South (Mignolo 2000: 17). Santos and Feyerabend agree that it is exclusionary and leads to academia having little of relevance to say and ends up only speaking to itself (Santos 2014: 145). Santos also stresses that truth only exists in relation to circumstances and methods (2014: 119), which ties in well with Feyerabend's notion of the impossibility of universal methods and truths. Both authors also share a deep appreciation for non-academic knowledges and everyday experiences (Santos 2014: 120). And, finally, Santos addresses the matter of theory and methods in modern research while stating that it is based on overly developed methods while lacking theory (2014: 147). Here, Feyerabend's criticism of the lack of flexibility to work in new circumstances could be a valuable addition. They both agree on the limited abilities of theory, with Santos stressing its limited development, and Feyerabend theoretical inconsistencies.

This, of course, does not answer the question of whether academia is salvageable at all. Much decolonial writing takes place at the border of academic work, much of its activism being outside of academia. Even further, delinking of decolonial thought and knowledges from Eurocentric academia is vital to ensuring its unhindered work (Mignolo 2007: 453). However, if we are not to completely abolish academia in the first place, a change of paradigms as proposed by Feyerabend is also necessary in order to establish a version of academia that is more diverse in knowledges, self-critical, and aware of its own history. This would most likely also include the abolition of disciplinary boundaries (Connell 2021: 349) and the introduction of more diverse teaching curricula and styles (Alcoff 2017: 400), including local knowledges (Heleta 2016: 5) and various histories (Pitts 2017: 153), methodologies, epistemologies (Connell 2021: 350), as well as ethics (Mungwini 2017: 15). It also necessitates the recentring of academia in the context of its own geographical origin and to no longer understand it as being universal. Instead, such a process of localisation allows for other

local centres. After all, "if science were just one among many equally influential ways of knowing […], the epistemic injustices perpetrated through them would be far less serious" (Grasswick 2017: 321).

3. Concluding remarks

In this paper I reread Feyerabend's later works through the lens of epistemic violence, with the aim of adding to the debate around the decolonisation of knowledge. I tackled three of his main arguments, detailing his awareness of the hegemonic nature of academia. Therefore, his criticism speaks to decolonial communities, and his absence from their debates is a missed opportunity.

His ideas often remain vague, as they are in the difficult position of attempting to concretise an idea that is not supposed to tell people what to do, analogous to the struggles of anarchist writers. I further argued that his ideas of democratic relativism and epistemological anarchism are relevant approaches for the goal of changing academia, due to their different position. Researchers from the Global North need to surrender the lead in the decolonial project to those far more capable of it. This is not to say that they should all just passively watch; but they need to give up the claim to making the decisions and driving the project forward on their own terms. Instead, they should learn from marginalised scholars, if these are willing to teach, (Mignolo 2009: 172) and follow their guidance in both research and activism.

Feyerabend represents the privilege of a researcher from the Global North. His self-assurance of participating in academic debates as a student, his professional network, and the job opportunities he had despite his provocative work, underline this. Therefore, and due to the many blind spots in his work when it comes to the sheer dimensions of coloniality, his work is not suitable to teach anyone about decolonisation. Yet, leaving decolonial and marginalised scholars to centre their own knowledges and epistemologies is just one side of the coin; the other is to decentre academia from within. It is the responsibility of researchers from the Global North to check their own institutions and give up the space they occupy without justification. The opening of academic debates towards new knowledges,

be it as part of their own canon or as equal partners outside of the academic institutional setting, requires change in how researchers think and act. Decolonial researchers from the Global North must consider themselves as allies (Santos 2014: 9,14,16). This requires epistemological changes and the act of stepping aside. It means actively working towards universities which are less exclusive and easier to navigate for a more diverse set of researchers, and to share spaces with those not working in academia. This is where Feyerabend's contributions are the most relevant.

Furthermore, Feyerabend's writings share many similarities with approaches to epistemic violence. Although he did not explicitly address epistemic violence, his critique of academia as an exclusive and overpowering system is in line with decolonial writings on epistemic violence. Both address the issue of how knowers of one knowledge are lifted up, whereas other knowers are not considered knowers in the first place and not taken seriously when speaking from the perspective of their knowledge. He adds to the debate a dimension on awareness of how the uplifted Eurocentric knowledge is deeply flawed, hence making its universalistic claims invalid in yet another way. His suggestions are valuable in how they help to decentre knowledges and open room for non-violent epistemological exchange and diverse and open research.

Regarding the question of how Feyerabend's ideas could be translated into research practice, the scope of this paper allowed for mere hints. Further development of those ideas is necessary and will be rewarding for academia, as well as beyond. Additionally, this paper made several references to similarities between Feyerabend's thought and anarchism, as well as towards anarchism and decolonial thought. These avenues also deserve further research and elaboration.

1 At the time of writing of this paper the recent criticism of Boaventura de Sousa Santos' behaviour towards women who were dependent on him had not yet been published (Viaene et al. (2023); Matamala (2023)). Unfortunately, the time frame of publication of this paper did not allow for a rewriting after the allegations became known, and thus Santos remains a central reference throughout. I deeply regret this, and am in solidarity with Santos' victims as well as with all victims of abuse and oppression within academia and beyond.

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Abstract *Der Beitrag versucht eine Relektüre von Paul Feyerabends späteren Werken aus dekolonialer Perspektive und mit dem Ziel, zu den Debatten um epistemische Gewalt beizutragen. Drei Ideen Feyerabends – sein epistemologischer Anarchismus, sein demokratischer Relativismus sowie die Gleichheit von Wissenschaft und Mythos – werden als zentrale Elemente von Feyerabends kritischer Perspektive auf Wissenschaftshegemonie betrachtet. Sie werden vor dem Hintergrund epistemischer Gewalt in der Wissenschaft und hinsichtlich der Verstrickungen von Wissenschaft mit Staat und Gesellschaft diskutiert. Der Beitrag kommt zu dem Ergebnis, dass Feyerabends konkrete Handlungsvorschläge vielversprechend sind und über eine Neustrukturierung der Wissenschaften des Globalen Nordens zum Projekt der Dekolonialisierung beitragen können.*

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7.3. Paper 3: Redefining a Global Cosmopolitanism

Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung
https://doi.org/10.1007/s42597-024-00119-0

AUFSATZ

Redefining a global Cosmopolitanism: An attempt towards openness as a central concept in postcolonial conflict resolution

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Received: 20 June 2023 / Revised: 12 March 2024 / Accepted: 22 March 2024
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Abstract The paper deals with the question whether cosmopolitanism is still a relevant concept for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. First, three common criticisms of cosmopolitanism are addressed, namely that it is Eurocentric, elitist and hegemonic. The paper concludes that these criticisms tend to focus on a limited liberal understanding of cosmopolitanism that does not do justice to the diversity of the concept. A redefinition and renarration of cosmopolitanism from a postcolonial standpoint is therefore necessary. Such a definition can only be an open minimal definition that leaves room for appropriation and localisation. This new, global perspective on cosmopolitanism is then evaluated against the background of conflict resolution in practice. The relevance of the concept becomes apparent when looking at the presence of elitist cosmopolitanism in the field.

Keywords Cosmopolitanism · Postcolonialism · Conflict resolution · Peacebuilding

Neudefinition eines globalen Kosmopolitismus. Ein Versuch, Offenheit als zentrales Konzept der postkolonialen Konfliktbearbeitung zu diskutieren

Zusammenfassung Der Artikel beschäftigt sich mit der Frage ob Kosmopolitismus für Konfliktbearbeitung und Peacebuilding noch ein relevantes Konzept ist. Zunächst werden drei gängige Kritiken des Kosmopolitismus adressiert, nämlich Eurozentrismus, Elitismus und Hegemonie. Der Artikel kommt zu dem Schluss, dass diese Kritiken dazu tendieren, den Fokus auf ein eingeschränktes, liberales Verständnis des Kosmopolitismus zu legen und dem Konzept in seiner Diversität

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Published online: 22 April 2024

nicht gerecht werden. Eine Neudefinitinion und Neuerzählung des Kosmopolitismus aus postkolonialer Perspektive ist daher notwendig. Eine Definition kann immer nur eine Minimaldefinition sein, die Platz für Aneignung und Lokalisierung lässt. Dieser neue, globale Kosmopolitismus wird dann vor dem Hintergrund seiner Relevanz für die praktische Konfliktbearbeitung betrachtet. Die Bedeutung des Konzeptes wird dabei angesichts der Omnipräsenz von elitärem Kosmopolitismus im Feld deutlich.

Schlüsselwörter Kosmopolitismus · Postkolonialismus · Konfliktbearbeitung · Peacebuilding

1 Introduction

Cosmopolitanism is a concept with an ambivalent reputation. Its history is often told in a highly Eurocentric and hegemonic way leading to it being condemned for these very reasons. At the same time, after the end of the Cold War, when the new circumstances left many wondering about possible futures of the global order, the concept experienced a surge of academic attention and has had at least solid scholarly following ever since.

However, even this new cosmopolitanism of the 1990s and early 2000s has been under scrutiny from several directions. It typically builds on an understanding of cosmopolitanism that tells its history as a coherent evolution, most likely starting with ancient Greece leading to German enlightenment and, finally, to contemporary philosophy, meaning the respective work of those authors who tell this story. Colonialism might be briefly mentioned as a downside or misuse of an otherwise highly positively connoted concept, but a universal applicability and relevance is stressed. These narrations of the cosmopolitan (hi)story were particularly common in the early hype of post-Cold-War cosmopolitan thought and have left a strong imprint on cosmopolitanism as a concept. They were closely linked to liberal traditions of peacebuilding and therefore came under similar scrutiny.

Cosmopolitanism was a re-found treasure of modern Europe in this tradition. It was strongly based on universalist values that stemmed from Enlightenment thought and could be exported to other places (Ponzanesi 2018, p. 569). According to Sánchez-Flores (2010, p. 4–5), this liberal tradition of cosmopolitanism is based on three principles: individualism and the individual as the receiver of justice, an impartial and neutral viewpoint of the cosmopolitan perspective and the universalism of cosmopolitan principles. These principles and the core belief of liberal cosmopolitanism that "justice ought to transcend socially created borders between human beings" (Sánchez-Flores 2010, p. 6) then lead to a range of different interpretations depending on whether this basis is elaborated on a moral, social or political level. The cosmopolitan project has since broadened its horizons, not least due to a number of post- and decolonial efforts, although the liberal influence remains prominent in many contemporary cosmopolitanisms.

Cosmopolitan imaginations range from Sen's and Nussbaum's capabilities approach (Nussbaum 2007; 2013; Sen 2013) to Benhabib's iterative judicial integration (Benhabib 2004, 2016) and Beck's analytical take (Beck 2004). More recently,

decolonial cosmopolitanism (Mignolo 2018a) and critical approaches (Delanty and Harris 2018) have introduced a variety of cosmopolitanisms that are pluriversal and empowering and take into account both the complicated historic legacy and the potential of the concept.

These are the cosmopolitan debates that will also be addressed in this paper. To this aim, cosmopolitanism is understood as a metacultural principle (Strydom 2018, p. 82) that is based on the appreciation of human difference (Bhabha 1994, p. 32) and exchange. It aims to place this ideal above any claim to difference. Styrdom's notion of cosmopolitanism as a metacultural principle is his interpretation of two reflections (Apel 1997; Habermas 1997) on Kant's notion of cosmopolitanism. It is firmly anchored in modernity. This metacultural dimension of cosmopolitanism is one of intuitiveness (Habermas 1997, p. 113) and goes beyond socio-cultural upbringing. Such an intuitive human notion of cosmopolitan values is not a universalistic law but a basic principle of connection and interaction and thus a metacultural principle. And while the authors mentioned above argue from a Eurocentric perspective, this paper aims to show empirically its existence beyond the European context in an exemplary way. It is specifically not a toolbox or a hands-on approach to peace but a mindset revolving around ideas of openness and appreciation of difference. By limiting the concept to such a wider understanding, the impulse of liberal peacebuilding to apply universal concepts to specific context can be avoided. Instead, the aforementioned mindset can be understood more as a framing, a basic belief that is compatible to many contexts and can be made sense of through local knowledge and practice. The meta-cultural principle necessarily goes through a process of local adaptation to become a full-fledged local norm or practice. In and of itself, it is too vague, too abstract to be a specific practice. Any definition that goes beyond such a minimal approach to conceptualisation inevitably becomes part of the conceptual problem of cosmopolitanism, as will become apparent over the course of this paper, and will therefore be avoided.

The aforementioned minimal definition of cosmopolitanism is of course crucial not only in everyday interaction and global politics, two of the main areas to which it is often applied (see, among others, Werbner 2018a; Gülmez 2018), but also for any kind of interaction in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. As will be shown, there have been surprisingly few attempts to make cosmopolitanism useful as a concept for coping with conflicts, an issue that shall be addressed in the course of this paper. This is unfortunate, because cosmopolitanism and conflict resolution are a fairly intuitive connection. Cosmopolitan ideas form an antithesis to many of the common causes of conflict, as they prioritise shared humanity over differences and thus automatically oppose hegemonies. Of course, a cosmopolitanism rooted in ethnocentrism can never fully fulfil the promise it makes towards equality, as it implicitly favours one side over the other by prioritising one scientific tradition and one cultural narrative. A cosmopolitanism that wants to be relevant to conflict resolution on a global scale must therefore necessarily adopt a global perspective and favour a decolonial approach.

While this paper can show how limited our perspective on cosmopolitanism is, it cannot completely circumscribe our understanding. It can mention and problematise past and current misuses of the concept. It also advocates for giving it another chance

as a concept with serious potential by opening up a perspective on the diversity it entails. Of course, I have been socialised in a European education system for most of my life and am used to approaching questions in a distinctly European tradition of thought. This limits the way I can formulate my criticism and my thoughts. It also impacts the way I can understand the cosmopolitanism that I could access by how I do research and the languages I read. So while I consider cosmopolitanism is a relevant topic, I also want to acknowledge that it needs to be supplemented, first and foremost from non-European perspectives, which I cannot provide.

This paper will therefore attempt to do two things. First, it will aim at showing how cosmopolitanism is a far more helpful concept if one leaves the Eurocentric perspective behind. To do this, it will first dispel some misconceptions and then propose an alternative view based on an understanding of cosmopolitanism as openness and give a working definition of a global, postcolonial cosmopolitanism. It will be called global to distinguish it from other current cosmopolitan ideas, as it aims to transcend the European perspective in favour of a global perspective. In doing so, I will show that it is not the core belief of cosmopolitan thinking, namely of human equality and connectedness beyond any borders, that needs to be scrutinised, but rather its appropriation into modernity and the liberal practice that has emerged from it. And second, it will make first steps towards showing how the concept is useful for peacebuilding by looking at the prevalent notions of cosmopolitan elitism among peacebuilders, and then proposing how hegemonic structures of international interventions could be subverted by a change in mindset. This is not to say that such a change would dismantle structures, but that it is a first step of critique on the individual level towards a larger goal and structural change that goes far beyond individual mindsets.

This shows how the theoretical aim of redefining cosmopolitanism is closely related to its empirical, so to speak real-life, implication. To this end, this paper will argue how cosmopolitanism as a concept is useful if it is rid of the liberal interpretations that have been used in many contexts in a way that is not compatible with the cosmopolitan idea, and will propose an approach to such a revised understanding of cosmopolitanism and its immediate potential for current debates around international interventions in conflict. At the centre of this project is the goal to suggest a redefinition of cosmopolitanism to open up space for a different debate on and with cosmopolitan thinking and practice.

2 Toward a global understanding of cosmopolitanism

As mentioned in the introduction, cosmopolitanism does not have the best reputation (see Bhambra 2018 for a postcolonial critique that is also of particular relevance to this paper; Gahir 2016; Miller 2002 for a critique towards the applicability of cosmopolitanism and Buzan et al. 1998 for a realist critique) and most of the widely discussed critical assumptions towards the concept cannot simply be dismissed as false, as they indeed reflect past and present experiences with interpretations of cosmopolitanism. There is often an air of privilege and elitism attached to the concept

that is reinforced by the self-portrayal of so-called life style cosmopolitans[1]. This is not helped by the fact that many definitions are extremely marginalising towards concepts beyond European history of thought and beyond the practices of certain well-educated and privileged elites. Furthermore, past wrongdoings in the name of cosmopolitanism are rarely addressed by proponents of the concept, leaving it in critical limbo where it is either idealized or condemned and with little room for constructive criticism.

Nevertheless, limiting the concept to its flaws is a misconception of the richness and diversity of approaches it offers. Moreover, it limits its conception of cosmopolitanism to a liberal, European understanding and thus perpetuates the already existing hegemony in the production and narration of knowledge and ideas. I will therefore attempt to address some of the main criticisms by sorting them into the three categories Eurocentrism, elitism and hegemony, and by suggesting ways of dealing with them. In doing so, space is opened for a definition of cosmopolitanism that can give the concept more depth and relevance to current debates.

a. Cosmopolitanism is Eurocentric Cosmopolitanism is often said to be a Eurocentric concept. Following the aforementioned tradition of European appropriation and whitewashing of ancient Greek philosophy, through some early colonial Christian thinkers and secular enlightenment philosophy to contemporary thought, it has certainly become more diverse with the resurge of the concept over the last 35 years, but is still very much dominated by European and North American academics. This narration of cosmopolitanism is without any doubt highly Eurocentric.

However, this is not the only narration that exists, and its prevalence could be attributed to knowledge hegemonies within the scientific community rather than to its supposed singularity. This might be true for the term cosmopolitanism itself, which originated in Greece, but certainly not for the sentiment or values on which cosmopolitanism is based. This part of the paper will therefore attempt to show some of the diverse cosmopolitanisms that have been thought up and lived over the course of history.

To this end, some examples from different places and times will be used to give an initial idea of how diverse and ubiquitous cosmopolitan ideas can be. The five world religions are used as a starting point for two reasons. First, cosmopolitanism is associated with belief systems such as religion, which form the basis for values and morals as well as processes of world-making, in the sense of a set of beliefs through which believers makes sense of and thus create the world around them. The assertion that versions of cosmopolitanism can be found in all (global) religions is also made by several authors (Turner 2018; Roudometof 2018, p. 123; Iqtidar 2018, p. 160), but examples are rarely given (Roudometof 2018, p. 123–124). As there are, of course, cultural belief systems that are either secular or influenced by religions

[1] Lifestyle or banal cosmopolitanism describes a type of self-ascribed cosmopolitan lifestyle that is strongly based on globalized consumption, frequent travel and privileged intercultural exchange. While these lifestyles can promote acceptance of differences in individuals it can also lead to a superficial and potentially harmful interaction with different contexts or even foster stereotyping. It is strongly focused on appearances and often promotes individualist self-realisation (Waghmore 2019, p. 2; Thiollet and Assaf 2021; Woodward/Skrbiš 2018b, p. 132; He and Brown 2018, p. 481–483).

other than the five so-called world religions, this aspect will be acknowledged by briefly looking at other examples of cosmopolitan ideas.

In the three Abrahamic religions several narratives can be found that show similarities with cosmopolitanism, although there are of course also many differences (Al-Makassary 2019, p. 44; Roudometof 2018, p. 124). Appreciations of difference can be found in many religious contexts. A recurring motif is travelling, which is not a cosmopolitan ideal per se, but has been interpreted in cosmopolitan ways by various religious thinkers and philosophers.

The cosmopolitan understanding of travelling is expressed in the idea of learning to understand the unknown and to broaden one's own horizon (Feener/Gedacht 2018, p. 9–11; Lawrence 2018, p. 37–38), but also the question of home and belonging (Feener and Gedacht 2018, p. 9; Eshel 2003, p. 121–122). In many religious contexts, the traveller is synonymous with the sage (Lawrence 2018, p. 37–38; Miller and Ury 2018, p. 587). Another motif would be the idea of a humanity that is of greater significance than that which separates it into smaller units. Although this motif is often applied only to those who share the same faith, there are examples of thinkers and traditions that are clearly inclusive of all people (Miller and Ury 2018, p. 587; Inglis 2018, p. 47–48), such as the current movement of world Christianity, which is particularly prominent on the African continent and which focuses very explicitly on the idea of a human universality that transcends religious boundaries (Kaunda 2020, p. 482–483).

Similarly, Hinduism and Buddhism also share motifs of cosmopolitanism. Both are often seen as tolerant and inclusive religions that allow for greater cultural and sometimes even religious mingling (Nicholson 2010, p. 195; Sharma 2011, p. 137–138). Intercultural and interreligious exchange are of central historical relevance and are valued (Padmanabhan 2018, p. 506–507). Both religions also share narratives of a united humanity. In Hinduism, there is the belief that humanity once was one and later split into different groups (Sharma 2011, p. 13–23).

Contemporary religious leaders in particular promote the thought that, based on this premise, the strengthening of a global community of all humans, regardless of their religion, is a religious duty. Since all humans strive to attain liberation and truth and can succeed in doing so, and since they all have the same origin, distinctions become less relevant (Nicholson 2010, p. 204; Padmanabhan 2018, p. 510–512).

Contemporary Buddhism, on the other hand, emphasises the interconnectedness of all humans. This is due to the fact that our perception of ourselves as separate entity with a self and distinct identity are but an illusion. This belief is grounded in the traditional Buddhist worldview of the interconnectedness of everything including all living beings (Albahari 2011; Rizvi and Choo 2020, p. 5). Consequently, it makes no particular sense to divide humanity into groups or even assign them different attributes (Ward 2013, p. 142–145).

It is important to stress again that religious belief systems are not cosmopolitan or communitarian per se[2]. Rather, they are diverse, with different interpretations and appropriations by individuals and groups, which then lead to complex and at times

[2] For more background on the current debate on cosmopolitanism vs. communitarianism see Zürn and De Wilde (2016); De Wilde et al. (2019).

contradictory variations of central themes, some of which are cosmopolitan. What is striking is that in all of them there are ideas that can and have been interpreted as cosmopolitan. At the same time, of course, the world is not limited to these five religions, although their combined influence on large parts of the world, even beyond the immediate sphere of believers, gives them tremendous cultural significance. Many regions where these religions are practiced were also part of a lively exchange of ideas and goods long before European colonialism forced them into even closer connection (Frederiks 2020, p. 30).

To illustrate that cosmopolitan ideas go beyond these contexts, a few more examples of cosmopolitan thinking should be mentioned. The examples listed below are both spiritual and profane in nature, but are not directly linked to any of the five religions already mentioned. They can also all be considered pre-colonial in origin though some have survived until today.

The first case to be mentioned are historical findings from Mesoamerica. Several individual groups there were bound together by the shared belief in Quetzalcoatl and shared cultural knowledge. Although there is no written evidence from this period, archaeologists have found that these intercultural exchanges, facilitated by travelling merchants, were extremely important to the region and that a secular attitude and behaviour was seen as preferable. These can be interpreted as a cosmopolitan lifestyle where openness to difference and intercultural competence were seen as advantages (Halperin 2017, p. 352–359).

Another historical example can be found in China. It is similarly based on trade and cultural exchange and was also ended by colonialism. The imperial Confucianist system of *tianxia* ("all under heaven") was based on military and commercial expansion with the aim of unifying all peoples. It can be argued that despite its imperial endeavour, *tianxia* still can be considered cosmopolitan in that it did not entail cultural hegemony and fostered intercultural exchange towards both the centre and the periphery. What makes the example cosmopolitan, even if it is not desirable for emulation, is the appreciation of the plurality of lifestyles and belief systems that not only allowed people to live out their cultural heritage but also encouraged exchange and mutual influence (Rofel 2018, p. 517–518).

In the meantime, other examples of pre-colonial cosmopolitan worldviews have survived and are still part of our world today. A fairly well-known example is the concept of Ubuntu ("connectedness" or "interdependence" are perhaps approximate but not exact translations) that has translations in several African languages and is known to many cultures in sub-Saharan Africa. According to Ubuntu, one's existence is always related to others and to one's environment, so that any type of interaction is an affirmation of one's humanity through open and respectful behaviour towards all (Graness 2018, p. 396–397).

Similarly, a Melanesian cosmopolitan worldview has survived to this day, which has benefited immensely from the geographical remoteness of the region. In this perspective, each tribe or people stands at the centre of its world. The more other people gravitate towards one's own centre, the more powerful one's people are seen to be. Consequently, meeting people who come from other places is seens as a goal in itself, as is learning from the foreigners and being changed by the new knowledge.

Is is also assumed that recognition is only reciprocal, which is why getting to truly know the other is also an act of reaffirmation of the self (Hirsch 2008).

All of the above-mentioned traditions and approaches clearly show that the only thing that might be strictly European about cosmopolitanism is the dominant narration of its European origin. Cosmopolitanism seems to be present in two major currents: narratives about the unity of humanity and ideas centred around travel, knowledge and the appreciation of novelty and difference. Both perspectives can be found and often cumulate in contemporary accounts of cosmopolitanism. If this history is retold with a broader perspective and less academic gatekeeping, we will clearly see that it is not the cosmopolitan ideas that are Eurocentric but the academic world. This has already been made clear by the fact that we are dealing almost exclusively with historical ideas in this paper.

The limitations that we impose on knowledge through a Eurocentric perspective, especially in academia, also affect conflict resolution. They affect the way scholars and practitioners make sense of the world, not only on a cosmopolitan level but also when it comes to international politics and global crises. A Eurocentric explanation to conflict and conflict dynamics limits the possible solutions. This struggle is closely linked to an assumed lack of knowledge and expertise in the global South by large parts of the international community of workers in conflict resolution and related fields, who typically come from the global North (Pingeot 2020, p. 271). This prejudice in turn leads to a prioritisation of practices and thoughts from the Global North and drives the initial problem further in a spiral of exclusion. This is not only a question of global hegemony, but also has serious consequences for the practice of conflict resolution and the way it is taught with a Eurocentric bias (Bilgin 2019).

b. Cosmopolitanism is elitist Another common conception of cosmopolitanism is that it is an inherently elitist concept. This conception is in turn closely related to the Enlightenment current of cosmopolitan thought, which still is so influential on today's conception of what cosmopolitanism means. The philosophers of the Enlightenment were well-educated in several areas of study, well-read and (in some cases) widely travelled.

And similar ideas of what a cosmopolitan, a citizen of the world, is have become part of the narrative of cosmopolitanism in modernity and late modernity (Harrington 2018, p. 72; Chernilo 2018, p. 32–33). The cosmopolitan is still commonly considered to be a well-travelled person, but never a (forced) migrant who travels out of necessity. Exceptions can be made for European celebrities[3] who can be both refugees and cosmopolitans but certainly not for ordinary people from the global South (Bhambra 2018, p. 321–322). Of course, this understanding of cos-

[3] Thomas Mann and Albert Einstein are just two examples of famous European men who have been labelled as cosmopolitans in public debates and media articles (Czepel 2015; Reents 2014; American Museum of Natural History 2002). Both emigrated from Germany due to the rise of the NSDAP and became actively involved in politics. This is certainly something they have in common with many of today's (forced) migrants, which makes the discrepancy in public debates even more apparent as it is rather uncommon to refer to refugees from the global South as cosmopolitans (especially in European and US news). This is a criticism that Bhambra also levelled at Beck's writings on cosmopolitanism (2018, p. 321–322).

mopolitanism is one that is elitist as the mere ability to live this lifestyle requires significant financial resources as well as access to education and role models to follow.

However, understanding cosmopolitanism as a lifestyle is precisely the way in which this approach is limited. One can even argue that it is not (necessarily) cosmopolitanism at all, as the mere fact of travelling a lot is not synonymous with a cosmopolitan mindset. One can travel without being interested in or learning about the places one in travelling to, or even just reinforcing one's intrinsic racism. This becomes obvious in the many ways mass tourism shapes destinations to be similar to the places of origins of their customers and in numerous stories of uninformed and disrespectful tourists. This is not to say that travelling cannot help individuals develop a cosmopolitan mindset, it is just not a guaranteed outcome (Strydom 2018, p. 86–87).

On the other hand, cosmopolitanism can also be local and does not always require mobility or even very diverse environments, making it much more relevant for people who are not part of the elites. This goes back to the understanding that cosmopolitanism is first and foremost a mindset, which can be obtained and cultivated in various ways.

Several authors have taken it upon themselves to define a cosmopolitanism that counters the elitist cosmopolitan understanding of the European Enlightenment. These approaches go by names such as rooted (Halperin 2017, p. 353), vernacular (Werbner 2018a, p. 144) and subaltern cosmopolitanism (Balakrishnan 2018, p. 578) or cosmopolitanism from below (Yeoh and Lin 2018, p. 308).

Rooted or vernacular cosmopolitanism approaches are closely related concepts and focus on the local level of cosmopolitan experience and practice. They emphasise that if we want to understand cosmopolitanism as an actual, applicable mindset and not just an abstract theory, it must be situated and show that cosmopolitan practices are as present throughout the world today as they have been throughout history. Rooted cosmopolitanism pays more attention to the local level, while vernacular cosmopolitanism is often understood both as distinctly non-European and as focussing on the complex interface where the local and the global meet in a postcolonial setting (Werbner 2018b, pp. 108–113).

Subaltern cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanism from below describe approaches that start from the postcolonial marginality of their subjects. They intentionally deviate from the Eurocentric narrative of the privileged White traveler in order to show postcolonial cosmopolitans and cosmopolitanisms with a particular focus on critical approaches and anti-hegemonic practices (Ingram 2016).

All these approaches to cosmopolitanism share the understanding that cosmopolitanism must include notions of class, (post)coloniality and gender. They are strongly situated in local empirical cases and argue for a broad understanding of cosmopolitan lifestyles that emphasises their uniqueness in order to determine cosmopolitan attitudes among migrant workers with the same standards as among jet-setters (Bhambra 2018, p. 321–322). They address the fact that although elites from the Global South may be more similar and more welcomed to the rich classes of the Global North in many ways, they are still part of the Global South and cannot escape these hierarchies (Werbner 2018b, pp. 110–113). And they demonstrate intercultural,

interreligious and multilingual working class solidarity and comradeship not only in organised international contexts, but above all with the workers alongside them (Werbner 2018b, p. 114). In short, they show a diversity of ways of life that all can be subsumed under cosmopolitanism by aligning the term with attitudes rather than privileges.

To make it clearer to what extent the aforementioned stereotype of the rich cosmopolitan elite is removed from the concept of cosmopolitanism, it is advisable to consider it against the backdrop of globalisation, of which cosmopolitanism is considered a critique (Delanty/Harris 2018, p. 95). If cosmopolitanism is understood as a counter-project to globalisation, it does not serve to describe international economic elites, but is part of a critique of global capitalist structures. Instead of corporate structures, it is about individuals and human connections (Werbner 2018a, p. 143).

The decentring of who may be considered a cosmopolitan is therefore a question of interpretation of what types of behaviour and lifestyle can be included in the above definition of cosmopolitanism. But it is also a question of inclusion. We must ask ourselves who is allowed to participate in the application of which definition. This is particularly relevant in the context of the postcolonial criticism of power dynamics. Through one definition of cosmopolitanism or another, certain groups of individuals can be included or excluded, making this process always both scientific and political.

However, a key change must be made and accepted for this non-elitist, postcolonial and situated approach to cosmopolitanism to work. With the clichéd understanding of cosmopolitanism in the Enlightenment tradition comes a strong notion of self-reflection and self-titling, or what Werbner calls the 'cosmopolitan consciousness' (2018b, p. 113). In this context, being cosmopolitan is at least as much an identity as it is a mindset. This attitude is not exclusive to the global North, but is common among certain types of well-educated elites, where there is pride in being well-travelled and educated on cultural matters. In short, being cosmopolitan is mostly a self-ascribed notion. Of course this does not work if one broadens the spectrum of cosmopolitanism in the directions mentioned above, as the terminology itself as well as the implicit self-perception is directly linked to a privileged upbringing and socialisation either in the global North or with strong reference to its history of thought. Cosmopolitan consciousness in a narrower sense requires very specific forms of education with strong references to European intellectual history. Even in a broader understanding, it requires knowledge of cosmopolitanism as a concept or at least an academically socialised type of critical self-perception and the ability to situate oneself in abstract concepts—terms that are clearly not essential to cosmopolitan action. To take cosmopolitan consciousness out of the equation is therefore another step towards understanding cosmopolitanism as less elitist and to refrain from unnecessary gatekeeping. One does not have to be able to give a textbook definition of cosmopolitanism to act cosmopolitan.

Elitism and tendencies of gatekeeping, often in combination with racist behaviour, are also well known to international peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Here, elitist notions concern several different groups and relationships. On the one hand, the relationship between international interveners and the local population tends

to be structured by strong power asymmetries, in which the expertise supposedly only held by the international actors not only leads to different agency, but also to elitist views of the local (Pingeot 2020). On the other hand, gatekeeping is also prevalent within the peacekeeping community, where race and nationality along with whether one was trained in the Global North, lead to major differences in privilege, opportunity and security. While these behaviours need to be discussed in terms of their clearly structurally violent basis and inherent racism, they also entail an elitism in the understanding of a network of professionals that is very hard to access and where certain violent and highly problematic worldviews and practices are perpetuated (Podder/Manzillo 2021; Njeri 2021).

c. Cosmopolitanism is hegemonic A third criticism often levelled against cosmopolitanism is its hegemonic nature, which has been brought up by various scholars, first and foremost from critical and postcolonial schools. This criticism is primarily based on the observation of practices that are perceived as hegemonic and violent while being labelled cosmopolitan.

Such use of the term cosmopolitanism can be observed in both colonial and postcolonial practices as well as in some cosmopolitan literature. Similar to the first two claims, it is related to a very specific understanding of what cosmopolitanism is (supposed to be). One could easily argue that if we define cosmopolitanism as equal and respectful interaction and appreciation of difference, anything that does not adhere to these standards is simply not cosmopolitan. And while it can be argued that this argument is valid—something cannot be considered cosmopolitan simply because it claims to be, while at the same time violating the core of what cosmopolitanism is supposed to be—it is not enough to dismiss these claims when they relate to a history of violent oppression and global injustice. This criticism needs to be handled differently.

While both Eurocentrism and elitism can be targeted fairly directly to broaden the debate, renarrate the story and redefine the concept, this is not enough to address claims of hegemony as it is no longer just about an abstract concept but instead about violent structures that need to be addressed, acknowledged and consciously changed. We need to target what is done under cosmopolitan pretences.

The European colonial project was strongly supported by scientists and philosophers of the time. It is again in the tradition of the ideas of the Enlightenment, which centred on cosmopolitanism as an ideal of the privileged European lifestyle and theories about the evolution of human races.

Many legitimisations of colonialism are based on ideas of Europe's superiority and that exchange would help the rest of the world to develop faster to their standards. While all these ideas have long been scientifically disproven and are of course racist, their grounding in cosmopolitanism, albeit a very skewed understanding of cosmopolitanism, is undeniable. The so-called 'discovery' of the world was fostered by an interest in the Other—which was, of course, a mostly degrading and greedy interest tied to the European self-perception as the supposed centre of the world (Bhambra and Narayan 2017; Mignolo 2018b; Rodríguez-Salgado 2017).

The aforementioned European perspective was easily transported into a postcolonial era, even though the geographical perception of its centre may have shifted

slightly. At the same time, the way in which cosmopolitanism adapts to global hegemonies has changed in many ways. Neoliberal agendas erased the terminology of colonialism and replaced it with that of economic growth and globalisation, repeatedly falling back on cosmopolitan narratives as legitimisation. However, the global power dynamic remained similar and was maintained by institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. Often criticised as neo-imperial, Bhambra and Narayan explicitly label the postcolonial Europe and its neo-liberal global drive as anti-cosmopolitan, as it is not open to the world and its practices are hegemonic and racist (2017, p. 5–6).

Keeping in mind the close links between global (post)colonial hegemonies and cosmopolitan legitimisation, it becomes clear why postcolonial thinkers have a rather ambivalent perspective on cosmopolitanism. However, one complicated question remains to be addressed. Since postcolonial states are a triumph of the independence movements and were often fought for at great costs, the modern state as it exists today and is internationally recognised, remains a European invention (Kothari 1997). Transnational endeavours, on the other hand, are central to the anti- and decolonial movement (Pape 2019; Stenner 2019). At the same time, the call for cosmopolitanism, especially when it is conceived beyond the current state order, is met with suspicion, as it would ultimately also involve the abolition of the postcolonial states that are meant to guarantee postcolonial nations a certain degree of independence from the postcolonisers. The past has shown how easily cosmopolitanism can be used to strengthen (neo)colonial endeavours (Uimonen 2020, p. 92; Rao 2014, p. 167, 172).

Nevertheless, there is a large body of postcolonial work on cosmopolitanism. According to Balibar, the decolonisation project itself can be seen as an act of cosmopolitan practice (Stråth 2018, p. 67). Anti- and decolonial thinkers such as Rabindranath Tagore, Kwame Nkrumah and Frantz Fanon presented a wide range of ideas of cosmopolitan connectedness (Uimonen 2020, p. 91–93; Rao 2014, p. 179–180; Go 2013, p. 216–219). More current authors such as Mignolo (2018a) and Bhambra (2018) also work on decolonised notions of cosmopolitanism that go beyond universalism and Eurocentrism. Spivak's conception of planetarity even proposes a new terminology (2015). As their efforts show, there is the promise of a postcolonial cosmopolitanism that manages to renarrate the concept in a decolonial way while keeping in mind its dangers and violent history.

Of course, the debate about hegemony is also present in the literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. One of the most widespread forms is obviously the critique of liberal peace, with its tendency to impose liberal norms on societies through international intervention in conflicts. Even if some consider the concept of liberal peace to be outdated, liberal approaches to peace are far from extinct, especially in the field (Richmond and Ginty 2015). The 'local turn' and its new focus on appreciation and inclusion of local conflict resolution structures have certainly helped the cause (Brigg and Bleiker 2011; Yousaf and Poncian 2018). However, postcolonial scholars criticise the fact that the fundamental ideas of international conflict resolution are strongly informed by an almost colonial focus on governance over people (Jabri 2016, p. 155–160). The relationship between cosmopolitanism and conflict resolution thus exists not only at the level of dealing with similar issues

that are part of a tradition of Eurocentric hegemony, but also relates to the question of governance and the nation state as a supposed one-size-fits-all solution for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Here, the nation state, as an invention of European modernity, is considered the only possible form of organisation and is enforced with its institutions through state building. At the same time, it is a central point of discussion for theories of cosmopolitanism, a word whose etymology emphasises the global over national citizenship. To summarise, it can be said that cosmopolitanism can be—and often already is—much more than what its critics concede it to be. This does not mean that the criticised versions of cosmopolitanism do not exist. Quite the opposite: as long as these views play an important role in both academic and public debates, they dominate the agenda to a large extent. A cosmopolitanism that wants to overcome these dominant narratives and thus label itself as a postcolonial cosmopolitanism can never simply ignore them or consider them a thing of the past. Instead, it must constantly recognise them as a form of respect for the past and prevention for the future. Historical consciousness is therefore an important feature of postcolonial cosmopolitanism, as it is the basis for any claim that cosmopolitanism can be non-hegemonic. By recognizing it, cosmopolitanism can become a global, postcolonial, non-hegemonic cosmopolitanism. In doing so, it must also ensure that it does not reproduce common power structures within academic knowledge production and academic gatekeeping and be aware of the definition and narration of cosmopolitanism that it reproduces.

3 Cosmopolitanism through openness

As has been shown, the concept of cosmopolitanism is difficult to grasp, as its definition depends on a number of factors, such as the way the narrative of cosmopolitan history is told, the awareness of the wrongdoings that have happened under its pretence, and what it is actually intended to be used for.

So far, we have only established that cosmopolitanism is to be understood as a mindset. So now that it has now been shown that cosmopolitanism is far more than various critics of the concepts would have us believe, it is time to look at what cosmopolitanism might be instead. This is not meant to be a completed new conceptualization, but rather some suggestions as to where such a project could find its starting point. Decolonisation and renarration is a much larger project.

As previously mentioned, one of the main problems of cosmopolitanism, which is related to the liberal understanding, is its universalism. The past has shown that universalist claims are mostly Eurocentric and leave little room for equal interaction (Mota 2018, p. 450–451). Universalist claims also harbour at least the danger of imperial and totalitarian tendencies, even if they seek to overcome the colonial context of Eurocentric universalism. The mere claim of universalism is in direct opposition to the value of difference (Ingram 2018). A global cosmopolitanism can therefore not make a universalist claim. Instead, it is based on a concept of openness and a minimal definition. Etymologically, the word cosmopolitanism is based on the assumption of being a citizen of the world, which means prioritising this status over other affiliations such as nationality, gender or ethnicity.

Cosmopolitan mindsets can therefore be understood as attitudes in which belonging to humanity, or even planet Earth[4], is valued higher than any category of difference. Cosmopolitan practice is any practice that recognizes all humans, possibly even all living beings, as equal while showing appreciation and respect for their differences. As difference is recognized and valued, cosmopolitanism can never be a fixed set of rules or a clear way of behavior, as it would be almost impossible to encompass all different needs and perspectives. This is also primarily where the concept differs from liberal views, which set similar parameters but then ascribe them to a universalist claim and standardised implications. Instead, it is a meta-cultural principle (Strydom 2018, p. 82) of human coexistence that leaves room for adaptation and individual processes of making sense. It not only tolerates local appropriation, but explicitly welcomes it. A cosmopolitanism that is not hegemonic can only ever be a broad framework that gives space to those who are willing to fill it with meaning, and that can also only ever be its definition.

However, this should not be seen as a shortcoming, but as an opportunity for discourse and the exchange of what is possible within this framework, which is why it can be understood as cosmopolitanism as openness. It may seem too vague at first glance to really make a difference, but it is part of a tradition of thought that encourages both academics and practitioners, particularly from the Global North, to stop trying to impose what they think to be true or right on the world, but to facilitate processes that empower those affected and their opinions and solutions. Of course, this also applies to this paper, which was written by a white European woman. Talking about an issue without making hegemonic claims to knowledge is a difficulty in itself and is a way in which the open and minimalist approach to cosmopolitanism becomes relevant even in the writing of this paper. In proposing universalist cosmopolitan values, I would take a similarly problematic position to the writings I criticise in this paper. This is precisely why the idea of a cosmopolitan mindset of openness only works on the described meta-level of suggesting a framing that is relatable to many through the process of appropriation in the context of local knowledge traditions and sets of values. It can be seen as a frame that allows for a shared basis on which to debate individual perspectives and opinions.

The cosmopolitanism that is proposed here is therefore open in two ways. It promotes the value of openness towards others as a minimal claim of what cosmopolitanism should be. And it is based in openness as a course of action of how cosmopolitanism should be filled with individual meaning.

The first contentual level of openness is nothing new, of course. Quite the opposite, Woodward and Skrbiš find openness (towards difference) to be the one common denominator of cosmopolitan ideas throughout time and disciplines (2018a, p. 52). Openness here is a key component to cosmopolitanism in that it fits perfectly with the proclaimed aim of this paper to limit cosmopolitanism to a minimal defini-

[4] Interspecies and green cosmopolitanism (Mendieta 2018; Valencia Sáiz 2005) extends the idea of cosmopolitanism from humans to other living beings or even to the whole of nature or the entire planet. Similarly, related concepts like conviviality (Adloff and Heins 2015) and Morin's concept of *terre patrie* (Morin and Kern 1999) establish ideas for a respect-based approach to life in this world that encompasses not only humans but the world as a whole.

tion in order to avoid hegemonic universalism as it is a necessary component of any cosmopolitan mindset. Unfortunately, in the past, openness has mostly been conceptualized in relation to lifestyle cosmopolitanism, leading to apparent empirical link between cosmopolitan openness and elitism, as elite classes tend to be more likely to engage in cosmopolitan consumerism. However, if cosmopolitan openness is understood more in terms of a mindset that is not necessarily linked to consumerism choices, and taking into consideration the findings of vernacular cosmopolitanism, this link becomes increasingly weaker (Ollivier 2008, p. 122–126). Ethical openness must at least to be seen as a type of its own kind. It is linked to the ability to think critically (Álvarez-Huerta et al. 2022, p. 2–3) and the willingness to engage with diverse experiences in a non-hierarchical way and without the desire to assimilate (Woodward and Skrbiš 2018a, p. 61). This appreciation of difference is central to the understanding of cosmopolitanism through openness and relates to its second level, where openness in fact does not mean the streamlining of ideas into a universal approach, but using openness to the other as well as to difference as a starting point for individual adaptation and appreciative exchange.

Of course, openness must also be discussed with regard to its limits. It is by no means the aim of this paper to propose a moral relativism. The understanding of openness proposed here is not to be equated with acceptance of or indifference to all opinions and actions. On the contrary, it allows for all sides involved to maintain their points of views. Rather, cosmopolitan openness is a framework in which differences can be discussed on a common basis and with mutual appreciation and respect. Anything else would be not acceptable, as it would lead to hegemonic universalism on the one hand and complicit indifference on the other. Consequently, openness is not the solution to conflict and disagreement in and of itself. It is merely a starting point for constructive debate and a mindset within the cosmopolitan framework of how to approach communication, especially in complex and different settings.

In this understanding, it is also a counter to the continuation of the colonial-national in which the difference leads to dominance and division rather than communication and learning. Here, openness and cosmopolitanism intersect in that they understand the common aspects of humanity while recognising differences.

And while the academic process of historically conscious renarration and decolonisation is hugely important, it is equally important to consider the immediate impact of cosmopolitanism on the practical side of peace and conflict. This is why the final part of this paper will shed some light on the possible implications of this global understanding of cosmopolitanism for the fields of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

4 Cosmopolitan mindsets in peacebuilding

There is surprisingly little literature on cosmopolitanism as an approach to conflict situations[5], even when the context is not limited to conflict resolution in the narrow sense, but extended to peacebuilding and similar concepts. This is surprising as both intra- and inter-state wars are in many cases closely linked to issues of statehood and territoriality, be it through separatism, occupation, contestation of governance or the establishment of sovereign nations, so the link between conflict and cosmopolitanism as an approach to global citizenship seem obvious.

Most of the existing literature dates from the late 1990s and early 2000s, which illustrates well the rise in interest in cosmopolitanism during this period. As might be expected, the understanding of cosmopolitanism used in these texts tend to follow the liberal-universalist school of Eurocentric thought, which this paper seeks to move beyond. Furthermore, many of these texts focussed specifically on peacekeeping and therefore treated cosmopolitanism as part of a liberal peacekeeping or UN agendas such as R2P or as a set of values to be implemented in post-conflict societies such as human rights. In this mindset, cosmopolitan values need to be activated as a countermeasure to identity politics and nationalism through processes of norm diffusion by international peacebuilders (Björkdahl 2005).

Cosmopolitanism has also been used as an argument to strengthen international interventions by framing it under the notion of global responsibility and cosmopolitan ethics (Gilmore 2014). While there was a general awareness of the potential of cosmopolitanism for peace, it was predominantly understood as a measure or tool of the Global North to be implemented in and/or taught in the Global South, emphasising its usefulness for all phases from prevention to resolution and from peacebuilding to justice (van den Anker 2000; Björkdahl 2005; Woodhouse and Ramsbotham 2005).

However, even more recent texts, i.e. those that emerged after the local turn in peacebuilding, tend to understand cosmopolitanism in the context of conflict (resolution) as a liberal concept in that it promotes classically liberal values and is to be exported to (post-)conflict regions. In many cases, cosmopolitanism becomes another tool in the toolbox of post-liberal peacebuilding and concrete principles of international action (Dietrich 2020). Even bottom-up and local approaches are prescribed by the international community (Martell 2011, p. 625). And while some of the ideas, such as Dietrich's critical political cosmopolitanism, are strongly inspired by localisation, dialogic approaches and critical theory and therefore contain important insights, they are nevertheless incompatible with cosmopolitanism as presented in this paper, as they are still strongly based on liberal values and fixed principles of engagement (2020). And while the desire for structure and handbook-like explanations that make cosmopolitanism useful for practitioners is understandable, I argue that cosmopolitanism is primarily relevant at the level of attitudes and mindsets of

[5] Some examples of literature on cosmopolitanism and conflict resolution or peacebuilding are Woodhouse and Ramsbotham (2005); van den Anker (2000); Björkdahl (2005); Lafont (2008); Dryzek (2006), whose papers are in the tradition of liberal peacebuilding and just war, which were prominent at the time. More recent literature on this topic include Dietrich (2020); Gilmore (2014).

international personnel in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, as such mindsets are followed by corresponding actions.

The attitudes of people on the ground matter and are crucial to how they influence interactions during projects and their outcome. In the following, I will focus on the attitudes of civilian international staff in peacebuilding and conflict resolution projects, disregarding the organisations they are working for. As will become clear in this chapter, this group is particularly interesting due to their typically cosmopolitan attitude (Goetze and Bliesemann de Guevara 2014, p. 792) in combination with their tendency to move from conflict to conflict and thus bring their values and attitudes with them (Autesserre 2017, p. 120–121). As a result, similar mindsets can be found in various international peacebuilding contexts around the globe. An empirical study by Goetze and Bliesemann de Guevara has shown that among civilian peacebuilders in post-conflict societies, most have a kind of cosmopolitan mindset, but also that their understanding of cosmopolitanism is in most cases rather close to limited liberal approach shown above (Goetze and Bliesemann de Guevara 2014). The omnipresence of cosmopolitan thinking among people working in IOs and NGOs is not particularly surprising, but fits well with the aforementioned elitist background of many international workers in peacebuilding contexts. Such environments tend to be full of people who have enjoyed a privileged upbringing in which cosmopolitan values and an appreciation—and knowledge—of international experiences in general are encouraged (Strijbis et al. 2019). This tendency emphasises the importance of examining how, not just whether, such a concept is part of the immediate reality of those who engage in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. This is particularly important given the criticism levelled at some understandings of cosmopolitanism throughout this paper. Goetze and Bliesemann de Guevara distinguished three types of cosmopolitanism, elite, glocal and localisable. Their study shows that their target group mostly understood cosmopolitanism in the elite sense, which they defined as universalist liberalist.

Some showed traits of glocal cosmopolitanism defined by international and globalised values. However, the localisable cosmopolitanism, defined as sensitive to the conflict context and inclusive of local agents, could not be found in any case (Goetze and Bliesemann de Guevara 2014, p. 800–801). Their findings are also confirmed by other researchers (Pingeot 2020, p. 270–271). Even if they do not use the terminology of cosmopolitanism to contextualise their findings, the accounts of on values, opinions and mindsets of peacebuilders and conflict workers are by no means scarce. Autesserre describes the extent to which peacebuilders share assumptions and practices in a way that goes beyond their background (2017, p. 120). These ‘peacebuilder mindsets’ emerge through the typical careers of peacebuilders and, due to the high mobility of the profession, are spread from place to place and thus across the world, leading to very similar mindsets in very different places. This in turn is favoured by the assumption of universal transferability of peacebuilding knowledge that is part of this mindset. Furthermore, the power structures of peacebuilding missions foster an environment in which it is advantageous to believe in this peacebuilding from the outset, and new workers are socialised into this mindset (Autesserre 2017, p. 120–121). This usually also includes ideas about the superiority and necessity of international interventions (Autesserre 2017, p. 124–125; Pingeot 2020, p. 275).

Autesserre goes on to explain that many of these assumptions are not scrutinised and that there is even empirical evidence that this mindset and the practices derived from it are counterproductive for peace efforts (2017, p. 121–122). Elitist mindsets in peacebuilding are therefore not only contestable on a moral level, but also pose a concrete threat to peacebuilding. This view is supplemented by Rinck and Boege in their comparison of peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone and Bougainville, which also takes up Autesserre's criticism of the peacebuilders' assumptions that the societies in which they intervene are deficient (Boege and Rinck 2019, p. 20–21). This is accompanied by a lifestyle that supports a mindset that is often characterised by gated communities, distance from local population and racist ideas about the society in which they intervene (Pingeot 2020, p. 275–276).

Nevertheless, this is of course not primarily a problem of individuals with elitist values. As already indicated, there are severe power relations at play in peacebuilding. Not only are individual international peacebuilders drawn into adapting the aforementioned peacebuilding mindset with heavy influence from national and international peacebuilding actors and donors (Autesserre 2017, p. 121). There are also strong power dynamics at work between international and national or local peacebuilders and between international actors and the societies or communities in conflict. These are often seen in a local-international binary that is even reinforced by localisation efforts (Pingeot 2020, p. 268). The problem is both hegemonic and a form of epistemic injustice in the way interveners and their knowledge are prioritised and placed in opposition to 'the local'. It tends to stand in a historical continuity of modern-colonial oppression.

Pingeot describes how the relationships between local actors and interveners are similar to those between colonisers and colonised. He goes on to explain that the interveners are in many ways close to and similar to the ruling elites in the places where they have intervened. It can therefore be difficult for the people to the conflict to distinguish them from the institution of the state, especially when the state itself is a party to the conflict or remains abstract for many people, leading to inevitable resistance to the interveners (Pingeot 2020, p. 271–275). As a result, problems in peacebuilding and rifts between interveners and intervened must be understood primarily as hegemonic problems and addressed as such: as structural issues related to a (quasi)colonial power dynamic (Pingeot 2020, p. 280).

This raises the question of how such structural problems can be addressed. As Pingeot rightly mentions, we need to discuss whether international interventions can be justified at all (2020: 283). However, as long as we do not have a satisfactory answer as to what the alternative could be, it must be an option to also think about reforming peacebuilding. Here it makes sense to return to the very helpful distinction between three types of cosmopolitanism explained above. The third variant of localisable cosmopolitanism is very similar to the postcolonial cosmopolitanism presented in this paper, although the latter goes further in its requirements for openness and its absence is therefore an indicator of a similarly lacking cosmopolitan mindset, not only among individuals but also at a structural and systemic level. It can be assumed that if localisable cosmopolitanism is not present locally, it will not be fostered by structures and institutions. And although there are certainly exceptions to this rule, the generally prevalent presence of elitist cosmopolitan mindsets

with liberal-universalist values is likely to reinforce top-down approaches with fixed agendas and hegemonic designs. This has also been empirically demonstrated by the authors mentioned above.

It has been shown that even the local turn is not sufficient, as it still creates a gap between the international and the local. I therefore argue that in precisely these contexts a shift of mindsets following the direction of the localisable towards a postcolonial cosmopolitan mindset could have concrete positive effects. It would be more aware of the dangers of hegemony and could create a truly open approach that promotes cooperation for sustainable peace and adheres less to the past logics of intervention and liberal agenda-setting. Instead, it could promote open dialogue (Boege and Rinck 2019, p. 21). Following Pingeot, recognition is not fulfilled by acknowledging a person's otherness, but by ensuring that interactions take place at eye level (Pingeot 2020, p. 282). Here, an attitude of cosmopolitan openness makes it possible to recognise and appreciate difference and to openly address others as partners in a process towards peace who bring valuable knowledge and do not need paternalistic guidance.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I have provided an overview of various criticisms of the concept of cosmopolitanism and shown why I do not consider the concept itself to be problematic, but rather see these shortcomings as the consequence of knowledge hegemony and a neo-colonial tendency in academia. By re-narrating cosmopolitanism through decolonisation and broadening the academic perspective to include historical and current examples of cosmopolitanism beyond Eurocentric scholarship, the potential of the concept becomes clear. Its global validity stems from it being thought up independently all over the world, time and time again. It therefore has the unique characteristic of being simultaneously local and global, which makes it a relevant concept for all kinds of intercultural interaction, including conflict resolution and peacebuilding. To avoid the mistakes of the past in this area, it is particularly necessary to free it from its liberal-universalist contextualisation, which has turned it into an instrument of liberal peacebuilding and of oppression.

Instead, it must be seen as a mindset that is specifically meant for local appropriation and is thus both flexible and a means of connection. Even if this makes the concept seem vague and unusable, it is precisely this radical openness that prevents it from becoming yet another hegemonic tool of international intervention.

The clear potential for abuse of cosmopolitanism has been demonstrated time and again in various episodes of (neoliberal) imperialism and colonialism. It is easy to frame interventions and conquests as cosmopolitan by applying a logic of hierarchy between human beings, peoples and nations and calling it an attempt to help. To avoid falling into that trap, cosmopolitanism can only ever be a framework of valuing the other, of openness and of recognising a common humanity. Beyond that, it must be filled with meaning by the individual and can guide interaction without imposing one's own principles to the other.

Although this paper does not aim to provide an empirical argument, the implications of its theoretical considerations for real live cannot be ignored.

By establishing global cosmopolitanism as a mindset, it also automatically becomes a prerequisite for any type of actual engagement with conflict that seeks to adhere to its goals and standards. As it is a moral foundation and a perspective through which to see the whole world, it can only ever be a starting point on which (inter)actions can be built, but not a new toolbox for interventions. Considering a cosmopolitan mindset is therefore one way to address some of the major criticisms against peacebuilding and a start to work towards a less hegemonic approach to conflict and the global responsibility that come with it.

A postcolonial cosmopolitanism can only ever be a framework that needs to be filled in specific contexts according to people's needs and experiences. This is another reason why it is important to take this debate beyond Eurocentric academic world into the hands of researchers and practitioners from the Global South and to work on it as a joint project, which in turn allows for difference and appropriation.

Funding Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

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