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DECOLONISATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION: THEORY, POLITICS AND GLOBAL PRAXIS

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ABSTRACT This essay addresses decolonization as a praxis involving "thinking and doing" (Mignolo, 2011) aimed at the critical education goals of representation, equity and social justice in the higher education context (Mbembe, 2016). It starts with an exposition of the notion (Amin, 1990; Ngugi, 1996), drawing principally on the work of Latin American theorist Walter Mignolo (2007, 2009, 2011) as well as African theorists (Amin, 1990; Mudimbe, 1988; Ngugi, 1996). It then explores the deployment of decolonization in contestations over environmental education (Tuck, McKenzie & McCoy, 2014) and central notions such as "science," "objectivity" and "the environment"; the positioning of Indigeneity, both in terms of representation within traditional (i.e. hegemonic, Eurocentric passing as universal) higher education (Windchief & Joseph, 2015) and the articulation of Indigenous alternative higher education institutions , including Indigenous thought, extramural work and the diversification of epistemology. Finally, taking as guide the crucial assertion that "decolonization is not a metaphor," (Tuck & Yang, 2012) and what we are distinguishing as "decolonization light" and "true decolonization," the essay turns to the prospects of decolonization of the university in a specific context, namely South Africa, as an example. We conclude that rather than a self-contained, self-sufficient discourse and praxis, decoloniality ought to be (re)conceptualized as necessarily opening up additional issues which need to be addressed for its fulfilment as concrete and fully viable representation, equity and social justice oriented education.

KEYWORDS: Higher Education, Praxis, Subaltern, Decolonial, Indigenous

Introduction: Decoloniality's Origins and Characteristics

This essay attempts to introduce the concept of decolonization in general and more specifically how it is or can be applied in higher education (and some of its sub-fields) as well as in a specific national context as example. In terms of ontology and epistemology and indeed the world order, decolonization helps us see that another world is possible. In terms of education a central premise of decolonization is that the entire project of education in the (formerly?) colonized nation-state is one that is not merely tainted by but in fact built on a foundation of colonialism.

It should make sense to start an essay on decolonization and decolonizing higher education with origins and definitions but we are uncomfortable with that task since we share Stuart Hall's (1992) suspicion of and ambivalence about assertions of definitive origins and singular histories (they end up giving altogether too much power to what Adichie (2009) has decried as "the single story" and leave little space for viable alternative and especially subaltern perspectives, timelines and histories). But for those coming newly to the topic we do need to provide something of an introduction to the notion of decolonization (Jansen, 2017), give some indication of origin and characteristics, however necessarily provisionally and ambivalently we put them forward. In attempting to provide something of an origin story we could do a lot worse than turn Walter Mignolo, who is a particularly ardent and prolific exponent of decolonial thought. Mignolo holds that decolonial thought and

project has its origin in the Bandung Conference of 1955 which brought together 29 African and Asian countries and resulted in the articulation of the notion (and political positioning) of the Third World. Before it became a pejorative term, "Third World" was originally articulated at that conference as a rejection of the binary of the two macro-narratives of capitalism and communism, a veritable "third way" of being situated in geopolitics. For the cultural side of things, Mignolo identifies the work of Frantz Fanon as the origin of the psychic and cultural aspect of this rejection of the totalized western conception of the world (and much as we love Fanon, for us this attribution is too definitive, singular and prescriptive). Decoloniality has since been more fully articulated and has been taken up around the world as discourse and political project, including in Latin America, in North America (especially in Canada) and in Africa (particularly South Africa). It is worth noting that it is Latin American scholars who are at the forefront of this articulation and who are doing the most at taking the project up most ardently and consistently, including the important aspect of connecting the dots between far-flung international projects of decolonization across the world.

Mignolo provides a list involving wide flung, global contributory theorists and thinkers, asserting that one of two pillars of the history of decolonization includes "individual thinkers and activists like Waman Puma de Ayala in colonial Peru, Ottabah Cugoano in the British Caribbean and then in London, in the eighteenth century; Mahatma Gandhi in nineteenth and twentieth century India; Amilcar Cabral in the Portuguese colonies of Africa; Aime´ Ce´saire and Frantz Fanon in the French Caribbean; W.E.B Dubois and Gloria Anzaldu´a in the US" (p.163). Clearly, then, decolonization can be said to be an articulation of diverse progressive thinkers and projects from (former?) colonies around the world.

It could be argued that in addition to the figures identified by Mignolo, there are other originary and contemporary contributors to what we can now identify as a global decolonization discourse. In the continental African context, for example, we can take up as formative the work of figures such as V.Y Mudimbe (1988), Samir Amin (1990), and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986, 1993). V.Y. Mudimbe could be said to set the groundwork for decolonial thought in Africa with his arguments in *The Invention of Africa* that the Africa and Africans that we know are "invented," by which he means not only that our knowledge is necessarily subjective but that the disciplines and discourses that represent, indeed produce Africa and Africans (philosophy, anthropology, missionary work) are Eurocentric, colonialist and colonizing. It is this always already distorted knowledge that everyone, from Europeans and other non-Africans in general, Africanists and even ("educated") Africans themselves, have about Africa and Africans. Mudimbe stresses that there is therefore a pivotal need for the acknowledgement and utilization of indigenous African ways of knowing (African gnosis if you will) to be taken up as alternative to Eurocentric Africanist work, to produce and come to know Africa and Africans very differently. His arguments contain some of the premises of decolonial thought, including variously, the subjective and potentially distorting nature of epistemology (and ontology), the idea that epistemology is (or can be) location based, the potential for a rejection of Eurocentric and colonizing epistemology passing itself off as neutral and universal and the articulation of a philosophical (or rather local, gnosis based) self-identity and identification of the (previously?) colonized.

In the case of the Egyptian Marxist political economist, Samir Amin, his text *Delinking: Towards a Polycentric World* is, or ought to be considered foundational to

decolonial thought. Amin contributed to the possibility of thinking outside the taken for granted, naturalized and supposedly inevitable organization of the world into Euro-American, Eurocentric, capitalist and colonialist centre and third world, colonized periphery. His proposal of a polycentric world involves the argument that there ought to be a reconceptualization in which a number of centres (and alternatives to capitalism), based on taking the nation state and its region as centre, can emerge globally. A rethinking of the organization of the world order from singular capitalist centre-periphery model to diffuse, polycentric model and with more than one single hegemonic economic ideology, is a precursor to the conceptualization of epistemic and cultural decolonization and empowerment and political, cultural and especially economic emancipation of the Third World. Furthermore, he put forward the very notion of delinking (which is an essential element of Mignolo's decolonial framework) as the means of facilitating the emergence of a polycentric world. Instead of the nations on the so-called periphery submitting their political and especially economic orientation and output towards, in support of and in subjugation to capitalism and the taken for granted Euro-Western centre, Amin proposed that the periphery "delink" from the capitalist market system and its world order and instead take the internal needs and self conception of peripheral nations as centres and priority and make what comes from the outside (including "the market") serve those needs.

In *Moving the Centre*, Ngugi makes a parallel argument to Amin, taking up the cultural and literary world and meaning making rather than Amin's emphasis on the economic. Ngugi speaks to the need for Africans to not consider themselves and their artistic and cultural work to be peripheral, to be judged by western, Eurocentric aesthetics. Instead, he argues, African cultural producers

and critics ought to make indigenous aesthetics the basis of production and evaluation of African works. Where Amin sees delinking as an means to the emergence of a polycentric world and the latter as an end in itself, Ngugi insists that moving the centre serves not as an end but as a means of bringing about a genuinely universal(ist) world, based presumably on multiple, coexisting and equally valued worldviews. In *Decolonizing the Mind* Ngugi addresses the notion of decolonization directly, observing that in the current neo-colonial period, the "educated" African's mind (and hence values, worldview, etc.) are still colonized after the period of actual colonization. There is a need, therefore, for Africans to take on the task of decolonizing their minds (a literary and linguistic version of Amin's economy based delinking) from Eurocentric and colonized self-conception and the revival of African ways of knowing, communicating and cultural production.

Mignolo's work on decoloniality

Decoloniality is a radical praxis project, necessarily involving both "thinking and doing," (Mignolo, 2011 xxvii) that offers the Third World (including, importantly, the Third World within the First World), the opportunity to opt out of the white, Eurocentric way of conceptualizating and engaging the world and the alternative of a social justice oriented third world to third world (re)conception of self and world order. Decoloniality is about delinking from the hegemonic game and constructing and participating in a new game. For example, the discourse of modernity (and struggle of the modern, ideas of pre-modern and whether we are currently post-modern) is evacuated by the assertion that those of us who have been designated peripheral need not engage modernity since no matter how we play that game we end up at the margin (either acknowledging we have yet to become modern or desperately asserting an alternative conception of the

modern). Mignolo holds that the West's domination of episteme and our conception of geopolitics means that we appear to have only two options for future organization of the globe, namely re-westernization (and the unfinished project of Western modernity) or de-westernization (and declaration of the limits of western modernity). Mignolo asserts a third option is possible- decoloniality- and the emergence of the global political society and polity delinked from rewesternization and dewesternization, one characterized by local and global social justice and the centering of the Indigenous and the Third World. This praxis project as envisioned by Mignolo includes several key elements:

1. Epistemic disobedience. This involves the articulation of a discomfort with the hegemonic world order and the positioning of some at the periphery and subsequently, rebelling against the world order.
2. Delinking. Opting out of the current conception of the way the world is ordered including materially and epistemologically.
3. Border Thinking. Delinking frees us up to think the world differently, including and especially orienting our thinking relationally, third world to third world (rather than third world to first world).
4. Theorizing the world. This involves drawing principally if not exclusively from "other" ways of knowing, theory from the South rather than received western and Eurocentric theory and episteme.
5. Eschewing Cartesian "worldview" for more holistic "world sensing." For Mignolo world sensing involves consciousness and getting to know the world not just through the eyes and the mind but by utilizing all our senses and importantly, including embodied knowledge.
6. Identity of alterity rather than otherness. Otherness is a trap since it too readily involves being

(mis)recognized by the dominant, hegemonic self (the variously fetishized opposite or exotic and repository of negative characteristics). Alterity insists on being unknown and unknowable and offers the possibility of identity outside the frame of binary self/other.

7. Decolonial epistemic perspective. This would be identity based, place based involving all the senses and embodied knowledge.
8. Rejection of the universal for the pluriversal. Western, Eurocentic knowledge and worldview passing off as universal is to be rejected in favour of multiple, co-existing, equivalent worldviews/worldsenses (with the important caveat that pluriversalism is not to become another metanarrative; rather it is a disposition characterized by humility and recognition of many ways of seeing the world)
9. The goal of decoloniality is the emergence of a new world order; the conviction that another world is possible. This involves an alternative conception of the world, the rebellious rejection of the current world order leading to the conception and production of a world that is more socially and globally just, a pluriverse in which the Third World can contribute to the emergence of multiple centres.

In what follows we begin to outline how decolonization (given the characteristics outlined by Mignolo and others) can play out in sub-fields of education studies.

Changes and Contestations around "Science", "Objectivity", and "Environment"

Decolonization is a praxis project that questions the Eurocentric, universal claims on "science" and "objectivity", and the western monopoly on epistemology. We would like to point to concrete examples of how this plays out in terms of the paradigmatic shift involved in the

field of education. One of the emerging paradigmatic shifts could be seen in environmental studies curricula where integrations of different ways of sensing and knowing are coming to the fore. There are two main positions, both using interdisciplinary approaches: there is a softer, reformist approach that includes Indigenous perspectives in the environmental studies curriculum and assumes epistemological commensurability. We consider this very important work of accommodation and inclusion but as not quite decolonization. Rather, such work is, at best, "decolonization light." There is a more radical approach that centres Indigenous epistemological and ontological accounts of land, and assumes ontological incommensurability between settlers and Indigenous peoples, especially when it comes to cosmology and the relationship to the land. We consider this second approach to be "true" decolonization.

An example of the first approach, i.e. what we are calling "decolonization light," is a special issue of the journal *Environmental Studies and Sciences (ESS)* on the theme, "Why link Indigenous ways of knowing with the teaching of environmental studies and sciences." *ESS* is an academic journal that addresses the coupling of human-nature system sustainability and in this particular issue tells successful stories of accommodation, knowledge integration, and mutual learning between Indigenous and Western knowledge, with mutual, compatible concern for the Earth (Rich, 2012). Contributors to this special issue include faculty and researchers from biological science, plant ecology, integrative science, sustainability, Indigenous environmental studies, and education. They identify as members of specific Native American, First Nations or Aboriginal communities, and/or Anglo-European or European heritages, working in public, private, and tribal and band institutions in the USA and Canada, and serving

Indigenous and mainstream students. The introduction highlights the crucial need to move beyond interdisciplinary teaching and learning, with a commitment towards integration of different ways of knowing, because "academic disciplines are part of the Western intellectual tradition, relying primarily on a framing of 'interdisciplinarity' to define field identity perpetuates the long-standing invisibility and exclusion of knowledges that exist outside of the Western intellectual tradition" (Rich, 2012, p.308). Many of the successful stories revolve around the principle of "Two-Eyed Seeing": the idea of integrating Western knowledge and Indigenous knowledge in designing integrative science programs, environmental education curricula, etc., especially for students who were largely unaware of other epistemologies. One challenge, though, was the risk of Indigenous knowledge being tokenized and trivialized. Sylvia Moore (2012), a Mi'kmaw independent researcher, warns of this by contributing a trickster tale that illustrates in a humorous yet telling narrative, the contradictions and difficulties of moving from Eurocentric to Indigenous worldview when bringing traditional Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing into education programs.

It is in acknowledgement of the ambivalence and challenge leveled by figures such as Moore that lead us to the identification the second, more radical approach that we would identify as "true decolonization." For this, we will use the example of a special issue of *Environmental Education Research* (Eve Tuck et al., 2014) on the theme "Land education: Indigenous, post-colonial, and decolonizing perspectives on place and environmental education research," which examined the workings of decolonization and curriculum in both formal Kindergarten to Grade12 and higher education contexts, as well as informal, popular education context in the

society. Two points are worth noting about this project, that make it truly decolonial. First, the radical element lies in its assertion of epistemological and sometimes ontological incommensurability. Second, the journal issue centres Indigenous people's relationships to the land, and urges interrogation and transformation of the political links between academic curriculum, knowledge production, and the historical, social reality of settler colonialism in North America (Tuck et al., 2014). In addressing the context of higher education, Engel-Di Mauro & Carroll (2014) showcase concrete examples from Africana Studies and Geography to introduce how an African-centred approach can contribute to the development of a Land Education perspective and improve college-level environmental education in the United States of America. Dwelling on African diasporic histories and geographies and disrupting European settlers' perspective on Africanness, Africa, and America, the authors argue that "African-centred perspectives complement most Indigenous approaches by providing alternative means for the transmission of knowledge and understanding of land and one's place in it that brings to prominence diasporic connections to places erased by settler colonial approaches" (p.79). Collectively, the authors in this collection stress that "decolonization is not just symbolic; its material core is repatriation of native life and land, which is incommensurable with settler re-inhabitation of native land" in the U.S (or indeed elsewhere).

Decolonization and the University

As asserted earlier, the entire project of education in the (formerly?) colonized nation-state is one that is not merely tainted by but in fact built on a foundation of colonialism. Almeida and Kumalo (2018) point out for example that education in Canada is firmly based on settler colonialism with the result that universities and the academy are not

only built on Indigenous land (in some cases un-ceded Indigenous territory) but in their Eurocentric nature have the effect of erasure and elimination of Indigenous peoples and ways of knowing. Even more insidiously, not only Eurocentric bodies of knowledge and epistemologies but even supposedly progressive, social justice oriented discourses and pedagogies can end up marginalizing Indigenous curricular content, perspectives and students (St. Denis, 2011).

Decolonial education, therefore, has very substantial implications for the university beyond curriculum as knowledge as circumscribed within academia to the very contours and spatiality of the university. The first of these is that it demands a shift from the university as ivory tower model and even university-community links- what in North America has been popularized as "town-gown" relations (Blumenstyk, 1988; Martin, Smith & Phillips, 2002; Massey, Filed, & Chan, 2014)), to breaking down the barriers between the university and community in the conception, production, engagement and dissemination of knowledge.

Extramural, extracurricular work, and Indigenous claiming of higher education spaces

What types of radical cross-curricular projects of decolonization could be undertaken, more broadly and collaboratively, between universities and local communities? A concrete example is what has been called the "Meeting of Knowledges" project in Latin American contexts (De Carvalho & Flórez-Flórez, 2014): Academic activist intellectual participants such as Florez-Florez aruge for an audacious move beyond interdisciplinarity onto transdisciplinarity in order to focus on "knowledges with rules and logics that are not always inscribed in the academic canons" (p.122), and the Meeting of Knowledges

project exemplifies a political stand to decolonize Latin American universities, which is "based on the inclusion of the knowledge of Indigenous, Black and other traditional peoples of the region as part of the repertoire of valid knowledges that should be taught and expanded, on an equal footing with modern Western knowledge" (p.123). The project started at the University of Brasilia in Brazil in 2003, inviting masters of all knowledge systems to teach in the university, with the creation of a curriculum open to all knowledges visible today in the local areas and on the continent – reintroducing traditional arts and crafts, and different Afro, Indigenous, and popular worldviews not as anthropological data but as sources of knowledge. In particular, there were five modules: Dance, Music, and Theatre; Environmental Education and Reforestation: Learning to Live in the Land; Sociomusical Knowledges; The Wisdom of Medicinal Plants in Afro-Brazilian Communities; The Architecture of the Traditional Xingu House (pp.131-132).

In terms of identity, the Meeting Knowledges model involves Indigenous students and staff taking up space in and making distinct cultural identity based contributions to higher education. One example, in North America, is how American Indian/Alaska Native/Inuit students claim higher education spaces as their own: such as through the use of American Indian Student Services programs, digital media, sharing their survival tactics online, and consequently taking ownership of their own educational experiences (Windchief & Joseph, 2015). Another example, in Australia, is an articulation of integrative curriculum, intercultural learning, and Indigenous students' active learning (Nakata, 2011, 2013), which emphasizes skill-learning, cross-curricular representation of Indigenous knowledge, and a rejection of conceptualization of Indigenous and Western as dichotomized knowledges.

As important and radical as this model is, it represents another example of what we would consider "almost decolonial" or "decolonial light" since it is about accommodation and inclusion and opening up the university to community, to previously excluded or underrepresented groups and knowledges, rather than radically transforming the university as an institution.

Intercultural universities

True decolonization education involves even more radical transformation of the university and the production of an alternative model of institution of higher learning, one that can be found, but again only potentially as we will illustrate, in the example of what are being called "intercultural universities" (Tellez, Sandoval, & Gonzalez, 2006; Restorepo, 2014). The intercultural university ought to be taken seriously, as a kind of alternative higher education space strongly tied to local Indigenous knowledge and livelihood, community projects, and potentially, decolonization. As Daniel Mato asserts, "intercultural universities" are designed to "support political and social struggles with culturally and epistemologically appropriate modes of teaching, learning and research" (Mato, 2011), and are "explicitly framed by the actors involved as political responses to centuries of domination and exploitation, and their key aims are to strengthen processes of decolonization, development and autonomy" (Cupples & Glynn, 2014, p.57)

We draw attention to two illustrative cases, each highlighting a different decolonization process and resultant effects of "intercultural universities." The first case highlights the social class mobility and Indigenous consciousness-raising of rural Indigenous youth in Mexico, where the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural played an important role to produce "Indigenous

professionals" and "Indigenous intellectuals" (Mateos Cortés, 2017, pp.159-160). At this university, the degree course programmes offered are characterized by their "constructivist elements, the flexible framework of their curricula, as well as the links they forge with the surrounding communities and their promotion of community participation" (p.156). In the second half of the four-year B.A. degree studies, courses start to diversify towards five labour-market employability oriented study profiles: languages, law, sustainability, communication and health issues. Marginalized rural Indigenous youth came through these programmes to "rediscover and regain their ethnic identity, which is now combined with a novel, but rather strong identity and pride as pioneer university graduates and as Indigenous professionals" (p.165). Upon graduation, many rural Indigenous youth were self-employed and most explicitly self-identified as professional 'intermediaries', 'brokers' and/or as 'translators' between institutions, associations, government levels on the one hand and Indigenous communities on the other.

Intercultural universities are a radical departure from the traditional model and, as might be anticipated, they have met with considerable resistance. The second case we want to point to therefore is one that highlights ideological contestations around the building and running of intercultural universities. This is the case of Intercultural University 'Amawtay Wasi' in Ecuador, which was created in 2003 out of Indigenous movements with intellectual, activists, and grassroots supports, and yet suspended in 2014 from university system of Ecuador (Martín-Díaz, 2017). In the confluence of community activism, intellectual interventions, legal regulations, higher education reforms, and state policies that contributed to this model, there were three main contesting discourses supporting or criticizing the

creation of an intercultural university. First, those against intercultural universities also argued against interculturality/interculturidad (the Latin American discourse similar to multiculturalism- but with an emphasis on inclusion of Indigeneity rather than the supposed level playing field of a multiplicity of cultures and ethnoracial groupings in society- Howard, 2009; Stolle-McAllister, 2007)), their arguments a combination of fear of social fragmentation and rejection of identity politics. Second, there were those supportive of the intercultural movement but who had a quite static, fixed vision of ancestral culture. Third, intellectual and academic supporters, the main source of support for the intercultural university, who believed that the true decolonization model should operate even more radically in terms of both materiality and epistemology and through both militant activism as well as academic production (pp.81-85). The most telling message, however, might be the author's conclusion that the decolonial, radical version of interculturidad is still not quite ready, at least in the context of Ecuador. On the one hand, "other knowledges" are likely to remain in the curriculum as long as they are positioned as subaltern and as reflective only of the logics of an interested clientele. On the other hand, "a higher education institution focused on the production and dissemination of localized knowledge, with a firm commitment to the recognition of cultural identity not only in academia, but, above all, politically, is [considered] a troublesome institution" (p.86). In other words the intercultural university as true decolonial institution is not manifest but aspirational.

Decolonization theory operates effectively and usefully as a critique of Eurocentrism but needs a corollary of place based knowledge to make it a complete project. In geopolitical terms it is about reconceptualizing the world in terms of acknowledgement at least and active links at

best between decolonized projects around the world. On the African continent a project of decolonial education, including decolonizing the university, knowledge systems and the disciplines is being engaged (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Zondi, 2016). In terms of place based knowledge, for Africa it is about taking up African knowledge systems and theorizing from Africa. To concretize this, take the example of Achile Mbembe (2016) who discusses the anticolonial work of Frantz Fanon and in particular draws on the "Africanization" perspective of Ngugi wa Thiong'o to foreground linguistic decolonization: "A decolonized university in Africa should put African languages at the center of its teaching and learning project. Colonialism rhymes with monolingualism. The African university of tomorrow will be multilingual. It will teach [in] Swahili, isiZulu, isiXhosa, Shona, Yoruba, Hausa, Lingala, Gikuyu and it will teach all those other African languages French, Portuguese or Arabic have become, while making a space for Chinese, Hindi, etc." (p.36). While recognizing a more general point of decolonized university future as pluriversity with knowledge production that is open to epistemic diversity, Mbembe (2016) more specifically underscores the strategic importance of reconceptualizing diasporic intellectual networks that would enable "scholars of African descent in the rest of the world to transfer their skills and expertise without necessarily settling here [in Africa] permanently" (p.41).

Of relevance here is the deeper and wider engagement with complex African knowledges in the curricula and in the world. For example, in a special issue of the journal *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, Wright, Nashon & Anderson (2007) argue for "the need to recover, critically engage in, and selectively incorporate African values and customs into educational systems," in particular, "troubling the taken-for-grantedness of the hegemony of Eurocentric worldviews" (pp.243-244). In the

moves towards a polycentric world, also of relevance is how a diasporic African intellectual might speak to the decolonization potential in Western/Euro-American academic contexts. Dei (2000) in particular sees "the project of 'decolonization' as breaking with the ways in which the (African) Indigenous human condition is defined and shaped by dominant Euro-American cultures, and asserting an understanding of the Indigenous social reality informed by local experiences and practices"(p.111). His definition of "Indigenous knowledge" is a very broad one: grounded in long-term practices in the places and struggling for knowledge validity in relation to dominant Euro-American cultures. In this sense, and drawing on Frantz Fanon and Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Dei (2000) proposed the anticolonial perspective as "an epistemology of the colonized, anchored in the Indigenous sense of collective and common colonial consciousness …. also a celebration of oral, visual, textual, political and material resistances of colonized groups – a shift away from a sole preoccupation with victimization" (p.117).

Towards a Conclusion: If Decolonization is Not a Metaphor Are We Ready for "True Decolonization?"

Our final point and for us the most important point we wish to underscore is the assertion, indeed warning by North America scholars Tuck & Yang (2012) that "decolonization is not a metaphor." While noting that decolonization in the literature might well be increasingly, variously adopted in educational advocacy and scholarship (e.g, decolonizing a discipline/theory/method/education, etc.), it is important to emphasize that decolonization is "not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools" (p.1). Focusing on North America and centring the political intent of decolonization as unsettling settler colonialism, Tuck & Yang (2012) (Canadian and American

respectively), considered an ethics of incommensurability, pointedly asserting that "social justice, critical methodologies, or approaches that decenter settler perspectives have objectives that may be incommensurable with decolonization … [and] can be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism" (p.1). Tuck and Yang's remark, to our mind, anticipates the dangers of watering down decolonization, of taking up decolonization light as the real thing, of putting other projects, from the conservative to the very progressive, under this new umbrella, this latest, sexist discourse; the danger of diluting or even emptying decoloniality of its specific radical politics and agenda; the danger of rendering decolonization a floating signifier at best and an unfocused and toothless tiger of a fad at worst. Their assertion should act as a warning that the term must be used with some accuracy and strictly with relation to projects and goals that do come up to the characteristics and standards and overarching goals of the decolonial movement.

Given the arguments we have made and specific examples we have given (and especially the last point we have just made), our question to those advocating decolonizing the curriculum in the South African university would be not so much how do we decolonize the curriculum but rather do we really wish to take on the project of decolonizing the curriculum? Decolonization is seductive in its radical promise but in the end if taken literally and whole-heartedly, might be too radical as a practical agenda for the individual university let alone the entirety of an educational system.

Even if we answer in the affirmative, we would hold that decolonizing the higher education curriculum is an incomplete project. This is because we hold that decolonization is rather like deconstruction (and as

Gayatri Spivak, perhaps the most ardent proponent of deconstruction once declared, "deconstruction never constructed anything"). Similarly, we see decolonization as a powerful tool of critique of the status quo rather than a fleshed out alternative to it. It functions best as a means of exposing Eurocentrism in the curriculum, bodies of knowledge that are western or national or even local posing as universal. It is a way of pointing to a move from the absurdity of the universal to the modesty and honesty of the transversal. But decolonization does not fill in the blanks for us, it does not give us the body of knowledge that is at the local level, let alone how the dots of all those local knowledges connect at that final transversal destination. It does not give us, prepackaged, a body of knowledge to replace that vast prepackaged Eurocentic body of knowledge which, for good or ill, we have all accumulated and can readily access. It does not tell us (beyond critique of it) what we are to do with European/Eurocentric knowledge. How do we unlearn the Foucault we've read, how do we forget the Shakespeare and John Donne we've loved and quoted? And if we cannot unlearn nor forget, what do we do with that knowledge? And decolonization does not tell us what to do with the paradoxically familiar and foreign epistemology we have garnered, it does not reward us for the double work we on the margins have had to undertake (using what Du Bois (1903) referred to as our "double consciousness"): that tremendous multilingualism and code switching that means that while the average Canadian only has to use English in all spheres of life, the average South African student might have to use English for school work, Afrikaans for most interactions when she travels to the Free State and Zulu with her grandparents and the community in her home village.

In our view decolonization demands a corollary, a follow-up or, better yet, a parallel process of localization,

Africanization, Third Worldization of knowledge (both in terms of episteme and curriculum) for the process to be complete and for something to replace both the Eurocentric body of knowledge and, more importantly, Eurocentric epistemology. That, we would venture to say, is a monumental task – what is to be included and what is to be excluded, what is to be taken up at what level for what students with what politics and to what end, in other words how to wade through that considerable conundrum of the always already politicized field of curriculum studies (Pinar, 2000; Wright, 2000, 2005)? Who is to teach the new curriculum and with what qualifications and expertise and what role should the university have in making that determination? In other words, there is a serious curriculum agenda to be worked out. It would be a curriculum that begs certain questions, many of them rather difficult and discomfiting. For example, in the context of African epistemologies and Blackness, we would ask:

1. How are different bodies of knowledge to be positioned and taken up in the new decolonized and Africanized curriculum?
2. What is to replace universal or even worldsense (since worldview won't do for decolonization? In other words, what is to be the worldsense (or what are to be the worldsenses, if plural) that will inform and guide the "new," (albeit always already existing but not previously utilized) curriculum?
3. How does body politics operate given the new curriculum? Now that the hegemony of whiteness has been exposed (not only in terms of the curriculum but in terms of the overrepresentation of whiteness in administration, faculty and even student body), how are various bodies (Black, white, colored, Indian, immigrant and other bodies) to be made to fit in relation to the new curriculum and what is to be done

about the highly probable reversed racial hierarchy (now that blackness- black thought, even black bodies is now emphasized, perhaps even (hopefully uncomfortably) valorized)?

4. How is spatiality (under erasure), perhaps better expressed as "nature including humans" to be taken up (i.e. which land locally and what relation to land and what new politics of belonging beyond nominal citizenship is to be taken up).
5. Putting points 3 and 4 together – what is to be the now overt and necessary politics of belonging to (or alienation from) the curriculum and knowledge making? Black, white, colored, Indian South Africans will not all be equally well positioned in relation to the new curriculum. How well are you positioned to deal with Blackness moving, as bell hooks cogently puts it, "from margin to centre"?
6. Is the decolonized curriculum to be local, national, continental or more generally transversal? There is value and beauty in the local but also the danger of parochialism. The national might be attractive but we see a strong need for addressing the creeping problem of xenophobia and the potential for a continental curriculum or better yet a transversal curriculum to address such problems of identity, belonging and acceptance of difference nationally and outer nationally.

Given the points we have made, you might well disagree with our conception and depiction of decolonization and the project of decolonizing the curriculum. From our end our final questions for South African institutions of higher education remain: are you really ready to decolonize the curriculum in education, at this university, in the academy? Are you ready to make and drink the decolonial project lemonade, to march in formation with other decolonial projects to that pluriversal destination?

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