Andrea Fleschenberg, Rosa Cordillera A. Castillo and Kai Kresse

Introduction: Reframing, Re-enacting Research and Collaboration

Too many contributions to knowledge, traditions of knowledge and individuals producing knowledge from marginalized regions in the so-called global South, but also from minoritarian and diasporic context locations both in the global North and in the global South, continue to be underappreciated in global scholarly conversations. Their contributions to theory building and emancipatory praxes are largely sidelined and barely circulate internationally – though things are beginning to change. This reflects the uneven geopolitics of knowledge production, which arguably is still skewed towards scholarship originating from the global North. This inequality is due to a combination of factors that include the uneven distribution of resources and publishing opportunities, but primarily Eurocentrism, which devalues if not erases or ignores epistemologies, bodies and praxes elsewhere. With urgent calls to decolonise academia, questions arise about how knowledge production could and should be conducted in order to redress existing imbalances and injustices, and their diverse means of perpetuation within current and ongoing structures. That is, there is a need to undo systems of higher education and research that have long been built on the seemingly certain pillars of Eurocentrism, with its underpinning hierarchical conceptions of human beings with whiteness at the top, and teleological models of human development in mind. There is, as Mbembe asserts, a "global Apartheid in Higher Education"[1] which needs to be overcome.

In short, Eurocentric knowledge producers and academic systems in both the global North and the global South do not give Southern thinkers, practitioners, practices and ideas the attention and exposure they deserve. On this basis, we seek to stimulate and cultivate serious, long-term and collaborative engagement in *thinking with the South*. This means to learn *with* Southern knowledge makers, to seriously engage with works and intellectual traditions as well as current critical interventions from non-Western and non-Europhone regions, in order to understand and shape alternative ways to navigate the world and address and tackle pressing global issues. This is done alongside incisive and continuous critique of the current global economy of knowledge production and its pervasive inequalities and exclusions and thinking through ways of undoing these inequalities and exclusions.

1 Mbembe 2016, 38.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110780567-001

Needless to say, frequently devalued contributions from marginalised places and positions are as crucial to knowledge of 'the world,' 'human beings' and 'society' as contributions from more recognized, hegemonic places of knowledge production. As decolonial, postcolonial and other critics have long argued, the dominance of conceptual and institutional Eurocentrism in global academia and knowledge production needs to be reined in and overcome.[2] Yet global progress on this front has been incremental and slow despite recent epistemic and equity debates related to the COVID-19 pandemic, global health and restitution, among others. Indeed, the larger project of rewriting and re-shaping the humanities and social sciences globally by integrating key references, arguments and contributors from the South as well as from minoritarian and diasporic context perspectives has only just begun. A key pathway here consists in arduous, empirically based work, thus fundamental research (*Grundlagenforschung*), that requires diverse kinds of inter-/disciplinary and linguistic expertise and can only be achieved by way of a collaborative, decentred approach across the so-called global North and South.

This volume emerges from the project *co²libri: conceptual collaboration – living borderless research interaction*, which assembles an interdisciplinary, transregionally oriented group of researchers and scholar-activists who have for many years pursued an inclusive and pluralising intellectual agenda, participating in decentred collaborative knowledge productions alongside their academic partners in many world regions. Building on these experiences, we – the editors and authors of this book, as members of this network – seek to contribute to the important project of decentring and decolonising the social sciences and humanities and diversifying their starting points in intersectional terms. We approach conceptual collaboration as a foundational dialogical principle motivated by three main objectives: a) to reconsider/rethink theory (in terms of alternative conceptual frameworks and baselines); b) to develop and cultivate visions of globally more fair and adequate research practices in the light of Southern perspectives; and c) to explore the potentials of genuine conceptual collaboration across disciplines, locations and positionalities. This should be implemented through a decentred, collaborative exchange with scholars based on diverging positions, moving beyond rhetorical discourses and problematizations towards a different praxis in terms of epistemologies, theorising, methodologies and research ethics that underpin academic knowledge productions and inform and interact

2 Alatas 2002; Castillo, Rubis and Pattathu 2023; Chilisa 2019; Cusicanqui 2020; Grosfoguel 2012; Maldonado-Torres 2016; Mohanty 2003; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017; Smith 2021; The River and Fire Collective 2021; Quijano 2007; Wynter 2003.

with wider publics (see chapters by Sanya Osha and Ahsan Kamal this volume). Many concepts and intellectual traditions across the world still constitute largely untapped fundamental resources with which to think, and we anticipate dialogically developing innovative approaches and perspectives that can benefit the humanities and social sciences across the global North and South. In other words, we take 'conceptual collaboration' seriously as a capacious and dialogically developed theory- and method-oriented reflection process, and we explore where and how far such a format can carry conversations and build ideas. In this effort, we build on long-standing relationships of mutual trust that our authors and network members have built with colleagues and institutions in their respective regions of study. And, importantly, we also make important steps towards dismantling the dominance of Eurocentrism in scholarly theory and academic research practice (see Fatima Castillo, Salim Hmimnat, Fathima Nizaruddin, June Rubis, Abida Bano and Khan/Holz/Fleschenberg, this volume).

The inferences we have drawn from the formats of dialogue and knowledge exchange in the framework of co²libri have convinced us of the need to also go beyond 'discussing concepts' and relating their understandings across cultures and world regions. Going beyond means to start out from a preconceptual epistemic vantage point, in which there is no given particular concept that informs the way we perceive reality. Rather, the lived reality itself encourages the formulation of concepts. Taking lived reality as a starting point allows us to see and embrace the plurality of ontological models that support the understanding of concepts. This applies also to more complicated scenarios, namely when several understandings of a concept are in contest with each other in the same societal environment (as Abdoulaye Sounaye and colleagues are exploring for the Hausa term *boko*, i.e. secular or Western education, in West Africa),[3] or where concepts are applied methodologically in a 'reversing gaze' perspective, with double standards once the target group changes (see the conversation between Nahed Samour and Elísio Macamo, this volume). Furthermore, as one dwells on the challenges of living together in the 21st century, concepts embedded in the living practices of subjects across the globe speak to the conundrums of the global health crisis, forced migration and climate change.[4] South African and East African notions of *ubuntu* and *utu*, for instance, point to the interrelatedness of all human subjects to the extent that they acknowledge a relational social identity. These notions, often

3 See Sounaye and colleagues in the ZMO-based research group 'Religion, Morality and boko' (ReMoboko): https://www.zmo.de/en/research/mainresearchprogram/contested-religion/remoboko, accessed August 4, 2023.

4 See Abimbola 2019 and Richardson 2019.

generalized as a relational 'I am because we are' approach, speak for the recognition of the interdependence that characterizes human–non-human relations as well as the relationship between humanity and the environment. Rethinking 'the human' from here offers new and different foundational perspectives, feeding into a valuable, different kind of social theory.

In theoretical terms, an important aim of co²libri is to cultivate conceptual collaboration through the involvement of different and complementary perspectives. This is a productive means both to uncover the ontological models that nurture the epistemic framing and perception and sensitize researchers and to increase awareness (among specialists and the wider public) of concepts and theoretical notions relevant to people's life worlds in the North and South (see Ahsan Kamal, Fatima Castillo and June Rubis, for example, this volume).

These imperatives and challenges animate *Thinking with the South*. Consisting of contributions from the co²libri network members mostly from the South but also with collaborators from the North, *Thinking with the South* is an invitation and a challenge to think with, learn from and value epistemologies, praxes and forms of collaboration emerging from the South (African, Middle Eastern and South and Southeast Asian contexts) and between Southern and Northern knowledge makers who have long been theorising, researching and tackling issues related to inequalities in knowledge production, decolonisation, ethics, academic freedom and scholar-activism. The authors not only discuss and engage in dialogue with partners, but also put the principle of 'no research about you without you' into practice (i.e. people should not be studied without their consent and involvement; see e.g. Fatima Castillo, Susanne Schmeidl, this volume), aiming to overcome a tradition of objectification of non-Western peoples. In various complementary ways, they have been laying out and elaborating upon key challenges that they have been facing, negotiating and tackling and the constructive counter-strategies which they have been actively shaping and coining pragmatically in response, as well as developing and asserting conceptual and theoretical approaches to collaboration, knowledge production, decoloniality, justice and activism, among others. Readers of this volume gain insights, for instance, into some constructive mechanisms and conceptual and methodological approaches that the contributors here developed when facing situations of structural inequality – be it in terms of funding for collaborative research or in terms of threats to academic freedom, neglect, or a dismissive attitude towards their scholarship because of their skin colour, gender or origin. These are reflexive, methodological, theoretical and critical positions that are creatively produced in quite different ways and are often grounded in and related to specific regional intellectual traditions and historical contexts that nonetheless have global significance.

As such, *Thinking with the South* addresses concerns about epistemological and political asymmetries: what would a more decentred (i.e. non-hegemonic), context-sensitive, critical de- or postcolonial knowledge production praxis look like for scholars from marginalised places and positions within the various global Souths as well as across the global North–South divide? In what ways do theoretical approaches, methodologies and ethical standards need to be revised when key concepts and approaches from Southern sites of enunciation are the main reference points? How do we then, for instance, think human life worlds and societies, as well as the relations between human, non-human and more-than-human beings, differently, and how does this enrich scholarly conversations and knowledges anywhere in the world?

By putting emphasis on the necessity of engaging dialogically with knowledge archives, intellectual traditions and theories outside the global North and across the global South, we want to foreground politically marginalised epistemological repertoires. But more than that, we also seek to move beyond the very dichotomies of North–South and centre–periphery by jointly and dialogically exploring the generative possibilities of what we call 'conceptual collaboration,' and thus a different research and teaching praxis. That is, we remain cautious and critical when we speak of 'North' and 'South.' We understand these terms less as reflecting real-world geographic locations than as analytics that index entangled and unequal relations of power in intersectional terms. While they are useful to address lingering global inequalities, their generalising tendencies may also obstruct a close view of the complex realities, historical specificities and often transnational entanglements involved in knowledge production. Such particularities need to be emphasized and better understood to be able to address lingering inequalities adequately (see Part One of this volume with contributions by Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Grace Akello and Prince Guma as well as Ahsan Kamal).

Urgencies

These days, urgent demands for decolonising academia abound, albeit with varying genealogies and trajectories in different parts of the world. Having become resonant only relatively recently in the global North, decolonial theory has been flourishing for decades in parts of the global South that have been struggling against the ongoing effects of colonisation, both physical and metaphysical, as well as among racialised and minoritised knowledge producers in the global North. These are decolonial theorists and activists who do not necessarily use the term 'decolonial' but who confront in various ways the coloniality

of knowledge, being and power that dehumanises non-Western epistemologies, bodies and praxes. Moosavi warns that the seeming "decolonial bandwagon" in the North is in danger of ignoring these theories "despite them being well established and sophisticated" and thus reproducing the coloniality of knowledge in the current turn to decoloniality in the global North.[5] At the same time, there are numerous South–South exchanges and collaborations that bypass the global North and do not take the global North as a point of reference.[6] *Thinking with the South* recognises these genealogies, engages with them, and works by centring the many important rehumanising and redistributive praxes already being done by global South knowledge makers, even if not all of them use the term decolonial.

It is important to acknowledge these genealogies and address such erasures. It is also crucial to be cognisant of the criticisms related to the turn to decoloniality. Indigenous scholars, for instance, have criticised the appropriation and extraction of Indigenous knowledges and methodologies by non-Indigenous scholars both in the global North and in the global South in their engagement with decoloniality, especially those who are white or have a proximity to whiteness, and of excluding or tokenising Indigenous knowledge makers in the process.[7] These ultimately reproduce the knowledge hierarchies that decoloniality is purportedly dismantling. Aymara activist and sociologist Sylvia Rivera Cusicanqui in particular calls out specific scholars, especially those located in North America, for building 'an empire within an empire' on the back of what she refers to as strategic appropriation by these scholars of the works of subaltern thinkers, including Indigenous scholars, in India and Latin America.[8] She furthermore argues:

> Neologisms such as de-colonial, transmodernity, and eco-si-mía proliferate, and such language entangles and paralyzes their objects of study: the indigenous and African-descended people with whom these academics believe they are in dialogue. But they also create a new academic canon, using a world of references and counterreferences that establish hierarchies and adopt new gurus.[9]

5 Moosavi 2020, 2.

6 See for example the Global Tapestry of Alternatives: https://www.globaltapestryofalternatives.org, accessed July 27, 2023.

7 Cusicanqui 2020; The River and Fire Collective 2021; Tuck and Yang 2012.

8 Cusicanqui 2020, 98.

9 Ibid., 102.

Critics have taken to task, too, decolonial scholars who do not reflect on their own complicities in settler colonialism and land dispossession.[10] Decoloniality thus runs the risk of being insignificant, unable if not unwilling to address and redress structural inequalities, racism, discrimination and silencing, thus preserving Eurocentric and white power and privilege.[11] As contemporary researchers in/from the global South and North, we, the editors and authors of this volume, acknowledge that it remains a duty and obligation for all academics working in affected and related fields today to address and redress the ongoing effects of coloniality as well as to be critically reflexive about our decolonial work. Among them are the perpetuation of inequality and academic (and epistemic) injustice, which we are undeniably participating in, within a system with a Eurocentric history. Those of us who are from the global North, specifically white scholars, have benefitted from such hierarchies more so than others; those who are based in the global North still continue to benefit from such inherent inequalities and dependencies in the global research landscape.[12] These are issues that the co²libri initiative and the authors of this volume in particular seek to address and redress, in sensitive and appropriate ways.

There are differential positionalities even among those occupying academic spaces in the North, which is reflected also with a view to the three editors of this book. As such, the process of preparing and editing this book has itself stimulated more thorough reflections on the complex webs and dynamics of privilege, power, dependencies and inequalities that the contributors as well as us editors are entangled in. What 'decolonial' means for each of us and our praxis, and what stakes and concerns are involved, is the outcome of such reflections. Notably, the power, privileges and challenges that a woman scholar-activist of color in white academia, such as Rosa Castillo who is a Filipina working in and on the Philippines and its diaspora, differ from those of Andrea Fleschenberg, who is a white East German woman working in and on South and Southeast Asia, and that of Kai Kresse, a male white West German working in and on Africa. We are all Berlin-based but with varying academic positions and security (Castillo is untenured, Fleschenberg and Kresse are permanent faculty, Kresse a full professor) that shape differing access to resources and power. We also do not face the same forms of exclusion (such as racism, epistemic violence, and sexism), and

10 Castillo, Rubis and Pattathu 2023; Tuck and Yang 2012.

11 Moosavi 2020, 2023; The River and Fire Collective 2021.

12 See for example Hountondji 1990.

the risks of speaking out against coloniality in academia in themselves vary as scholars move across the global North and South.[13]

This book, however, is also evidence of a shared goal that all its contributors, from different vantage points, contribute to in different ways, drawing from their respective expertise and positionalities. While everyone has a stake in decolonizing knowledge production, the stakes for white scholars differ from those who identify as Black, Indigenous and Person of Color, for whom decolonial work has been an existential part and parcel of fighting against the dehumanization that they and their communities are subjected to at everyday, epistemic, and structural levels. Such reflections and divergent positionalities are presented in the contributions of this volume, providing reflexive accounts of positionalities, experiences, activism, and theorizing. As a way to work through these varying positionalities, the editorial process of this volume proceeded through a peer mentoring process where authors commented on and reviewed each other's chapters. Not only is this process collaborative, it also offers an alternative to problematics of a simple blind review process which has been criticized for de facto being harmful and rife with sexism, racism, and Eurocentrism.[14]

Few things are more important these days than dedicating a substantial part of one's intellectual energy, as well as time and financial resources as scholars, to an engagement in activities and processes that will contribute to alleviating states of inequality and injustice. Redressing the ways in which scholars based in the North (or supported by it) benefit from larger research structures and a system that has been based on unfair foundations has become a burning issue. This does not mean, however, that all inequalities are reduceable to the after-effects of colonisation. Such a simplifying view would risk ignoring relevant specific regional and local dynamics and the respective histories and agencies of the people concerned, a critique which has led some to reject loose and generalising usages of 'decolonisation' as misleading.[15] Keeping this in view is all the more important given the ongoing pervasiveness of coloniality within post-colonies perpetrated also by national political elites. Scholarly debates on related matters are inevitably political and often highly politicised, and then in danger of presenting complex issues of decolonial aspirations in simple dichotomies, as part of a (sometimes heavily) normative rhetoric about who is (and who is not) permitted to speak, explore or participate in debate about these issues. In the light of these points, our volume seeks to combine both the necessary and important perspec-

13 Castillo 2023.
14 Docot 2022.
15 See for example Taiwo 2022.

tives, of the view on specificity and the provision of critique, when it comes to decolonial challenges and demands. The contributions here offer a wide range of specific accounts, discussions and case studies that engage with issues of decolonisation from diverse angles, each linked to a specific regional context. At the same time, readers are introduced to discussions about the benefits and challenges of thinking and theorising with concepts, models and thinkers from the global South.

Academic freedom is another urgent issue with which the contributors to *Thinking with the South* engage, particularly in view of recent political developments around the world, such as funding cuts for critical scholarship, a rise in (neo) populism and authoritarianism, and growing mistrust in science and governments across the globe (see Fathima Nizaruddin, Salim Hmimnat and Abida Bano, this volume). There is an urgent need to create and maintain inclusive spaces and collaborative formats that enable open dialogue and mutual exchange between academics, critical thinkers and activists based in the global North and South (see Hala Kamal, this volume). Given that this cannot be neatly mapped onto or assigned to particular localities (i.e. a global North versus a global South), we take academic freedom itself as a lens to interrogate North–South epistemic and political relations. In the context of practical experiences of collaboration, we enquire into the manifold genealogies and dynamics through which spaces and the practice of academic freedom become shaped and circumscribed (with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic's long durée and its impacts on knowledge production practices, see Khan/Holz/Fleschenberg, this volume). And we engage in critical activities together with partners who are directly affected by the contraction of academic freedom.

Contributions to This Edited Volume

This volume brings together a series of chapters that vary in format and length, written by scholars who take on a range of disciplinary, (trans)regional and epistemic perspectives. On the whole, the authors here, almost exclusively from the global South and working from different positionalities, are united in the goal to produce more adequate and more sensitive critical knowledge, and to provide and apply innovative perspectives on matters of approach, method and ethical standards. Alternative frames of reference for conceptualisation to established Eurocentric narratives of disciplines are given, as well as theorisations of lived experiences in specific non-Western worlds (which may be grounded in their respective intellectual traditions). Along such lines, the chapters build on and com-

plement a wider scenario of multi-layered, multi-disciplinary and transregional discussions and critical takes on the existing state of research and its underlying practices. Overall, the volume aims to build and shape transformative understandings and practices concerning what it means to take an adequate position, and a constructive role, for scholars based in the global North and/or South within the current field of calls and demands for decolonisation. So what we offer, with this collection of a range of diverse, brief, experience-near accounts of problems, challenges, projects and experiences by authors who are writing from, and thinking with, the South, is also a resource book (representing considerable internal diversity) to be engaged with, for further thinking and acting along meaningful lines.

Part One consists of reflections on the epistemological challenges of a wider system of hegemonic knowledge productions, the neoliberal and (neo-)colonial academia in a globalized world, characterized, shaped and constantly re-enacted by power asymmetries, intersecting exclusions and marginalisation.

The first forum entry in this collection speaks to this problematique through three voices, edited by Prince K. Guma with some introductory reflections. In **Global Coloniality of Power and Collaborative Knowledge Production**, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni highlights three key issues of a structural, ideational, epistemic and ontological nature which should be considered in any engagements on possibilities of genuine collaboration and partnership in knowledge production between scholars across the global South–North divide. He argues, first, that the South–North divide is more than a geography: it is also an epistemic and social location mediated by colonial matrices of power. Drawing from the work of the social anthropologist Francis B. Nyamnjoh,[16] Ndlovu-Gatsheni identifies 'ontologies of incompleteness' as a social reality, which is amenable to the envisaged 'convivial scholarship' that we should be working for. The thesis of 'ontologies of incompleteness' directly challenges what Slavoj Žižek termed the 'spectre of the Cartesian Subject' which was haunting Europe.[17] Eurocentric Cartesian conceptions of subjectivity, he says, are not amenable to any form of collaboration and partnership because they are opposed to the very possibilities of discursive intersubjectivity. The second issue is the resilient cognitive empire which continues to undercut possibilities of genuine collaboration and partnership through the sustenance of hierarchies and heterarchies of power, argues Ndlovu-Gatsheni. The third issue is the equally resilient unequal intellectual division of labour in the current global economy of knowledge. He concludes his reflections by making

16 Nyamnjoh 2017.
17 Žižek 1999.

a case for decolonisation predicated on relationality as an essential prerequisite for any genuine and sustainable collaboration and partnership between global North and global South scholars and institutions. The key message is a call for structural changes and changes to the intellectual consciousness of scholars in order for sustainable collaboration and partnership to emerge. Adding to Ndlovu-Gatsheni's call for structural changes and changes of intellectual consciousness of scholars as fundamentals of academic decolonisation are Prince K. Guma's reflections on **The Incompleteness of Scientific Knowledge**. Focusing as well on the 'infrastructures of collaboration,' Guma points towards an incompleteness of knowledge itself to challenge teleological pursuits in the academy and to propose possible pathways for consideration including calibration of collaborative infrastructures of knowledge production. He stresses a problematic tendency in academia to depict occurrences in developing contexts as adverse, divergent and outside the norm. Many scholars and practitioners tend to misrepresent such occurrences as deficient, failed and inadequate, he argues. While some put their faith in a type of blue print solutions, best practices and idyllic models as a panacea for *success*, others seek mechanisms of repair, renovation, and demolition or realignment as *solutions*. Inspired by the endeavour to find solutions and success, most scholars barely look beyond neoliberal-level precarity and compliance in their explorations. Within the social sciences, *solutions* have come to lie in proposals for furthering and enhancing investment, financing, planning, governance and regulatory reform and sometimes substituting state with non-state actors, or top-down with bottom-up approaches. These tendencies, Prince Guma argues, signify a general incompleteness of intellectual loops and circuits, so that it becomes important to acknowledge the very incompleteness of theory production and knowledge making itself and to counter teleological pursuits in academia. Reflecting upon asymmetries of academic collaborations, the third entry in this forum is presented by Grace Akello, who scrutinizes **The Nature of Inequality in Scientific Collaborations in Africa** with a particular focus on asymmetries in grant applications in global South–North research cooperation. Akello notes that when emerging scholars read calls for research grant applications by reputable grant-awarding bodies aiming to support their scientific research, everything on paper appears neutral, apolitical and value-free. Calls for applications encourage scientists to create a North–South union in order to comprehensively assess matters of global concern. In jointly producing *scientific* evidence – needed for interventions for protracted challenges – it appears that scientific evidence is indeed needed and is a panacea solution for protracted challenges. In many scientific meetings, evidence-based interventions are reported and evidence-based solutions are a basis for mitigating protracted global challenges, particularly in Africa. Few scientists have explored the detailed nature

of scientific collaborations and how inequality is created and perpetuated, she argues. In more than ten years of participation in major scientific collaborations, Grace Akello has observed that the entire process, from the inception of research priorities/questions, to methods, to how the grant will be managed, is an embodiment of various forms of inequality. Guidelines concerning what is science, how to apply and who will lead, manage or systematically report about the grant are a reflection of a systemic perpetuation of inequality, she argues in line with her co-authors. Although scientists from the South aim to make a significant contribution to the field including data collection and analysis, distribution of funds will suggest an economic and social imbalance. This is evidenced, for example, by fund allocation premises such as the annual income of the collaborator in the South or the GDP of the Southern collaborator as a frequently evoked basis for inequitable budget allocations for the same task performed. However, this fund allocation premise is regardless of workload, seniority or expertise in the case of a Southern researcher, earning much less compared to the researcher in the North. This systemic inequality is further perpetuated when only particular aspects of the research budget can be managed in the South.

The second forum entry, **'Reversing the Gaze'?! – Revisiting a Key Concept**, is a document of one of our many interdisciplinary and transregional conversations with colleagues ranging from the Middle East to Africa, Asia and Europe – in this case between Elísio Macamo, Professor of Sociology at the University of Basel and one of four principal investigators of the research project 'Reversing the Gaze – Towards Post-Comparative Area Studies,' and Nahed Samour, postdoctoral research fellow at the Integrative Research Institute Law & Society at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, concerned with Third World approaches to international law. Both scholars contend issues and implications of conceptual 'gazing,' not only for transregional and interdisciplinary knowledge productions. They raise concerns of epistemological and disciplinary boundaries and flaws and argue, if this is the appropriate term, a decentring or 'provincializing' of epistemological and disciplinary radars along with subsequent alternate research praxes.

This first part of the edited volume is complemented by two entries of single-authored discussion papers reflecting on Southern theorising and the challenges and practices thereof. Ahsan Kamal, in his chapter **What Good Is Southern Theorising?**, discusses contentious fields, blind spots and limitations as well as entry points or potentials for decolonising theoretical knowledge productions as part of the contemporary discourse of academic decolonisation.[18] Kamal acknowledges scholars' and activists' long-standing calls for decolonising knowl-

18 See Moosavi 2020.

edge, the academy and theory itself, thus globalising, diversifying and expanding the social theoretical canon to shed its Eurocentric and imperial baggage. However, he notes, in accordance with a number of critics, that most projects of new theorising are located in the global North, or they tend to follow Western academic trends, creating a rupture between epistemic and political decolonisation. What, then, he asks, is the potential for decolonising knowledge from the global South in the current era? Distinguishing between Northern attempts to 'southernise theory' from 'southern theorising,' Ahsan Kamal presents a conceptual framework based on the historical and social conditions of anti-colonial thought. Using the North as a relational concept determined by location, vocation and publics, he identifies the borders that need to be crossed to theorise from the South. His reflections rely on attempts to theorise from the study of rural activism in Pakistan to save water, land and ecological commons by demonstrating that the possibility of Southern theorising is often foreclosed due to hard boundaries between disciplines, theory and praxis, academia and activism, and the North and the South.

Marxism, Communitarianism and Communalism in Africa by Sanya Osha traces the development of Marxist thought with a particular focus on West Africa and explores theoretical alterations in praxis through the travels of Marxist thought that are evident in the eastern and western regions of the continent. Sanya Osha argues that in East Africa, there is an evident deployment of the concept of *ujamaa*, which may be regarded as an endogenous form of communitarianism and its eventual utilization in the larger nation-building project particularly in Tanzania. Communalism, communitarianism and communism (alternatively, the triple Cs) are all addressed in varying degrees to underline the significance of the collective ethos in the organization of everyday life, economic modalities and institutions, formal and heretical forms of political practice, and ultimately in defining the political economy of need. Understandably, the analyses of these socio-economic and political practices and processes seek to capture and unpack African realities and peculiarities against a hectic backdrop of neocolonialism and uneven decolonisation, Osha stresses. In interrogating the triple Cs in the work of African thinkers, *inter alia*, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Samir Amin and Ifeanyi Menkiti are discussed, including tensions and correlations between communalism and classical Marxian praxis, various conceptions of property and ownership and, finally, the shifting perceptions of land and its multiple histories and uses.

Part Two consists of eight discussion papers that scrutinise critical research methodologies, research methods and research ethics as decolonial, positionality-conscious and self-reflexive praxis with transregional insights ranging from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to South and Southeast Asia, Europe

and Australia. In **The Conflicted Decolonial Scholar: A Journey Through the Dialectics of Becoming, Un-becoming and Being, in Struggle with the People**, Fatima Alvarez Castillo takes us on a journey through the complexities of decolonial work for global South scholars, that is, bearers of colonial mentality who at the same time are struggling to break free and create liberatory scholarship, as evident in her own academic coming of age. Drawing from her teaching, research and ethics work as well as from revisiting the canon of critical approaches to knowledge productions, Fatima Alvarez Castillo shares difficulties, learnings and breakthroughs in and with the struggle against the dominant academic paradigm that sustains the colonial matrix of power. Reflexivity, alliance building with the oppressed both within and outside the university, and working with high standards of rigour, ethics and truthfulness while being mindful of the need for insurgent scholarship that contributes to making a more just and kinder world, are among the practices to counter the highlighted challenges, she argues. For Castillo, "[d]ecolonial scholarship has many sources of knowledge, methods, techniques, tools, wisdom, both subaltern and mainstream. We don't have to invent, mostly. Rich materials have been developed in feminist pedagogy, critical studies, indigenous studies, and by decolonial scholars. What is needed, perhaps, is more imagination; more praxis."[19] Why a praxis-centred approach is key is outlined in her 2016 intervention at an international conference in Durban, South Africa, with which she ends her chapter to our edited volume, and which merits posting in this introduction:

> When we peel away its wrappings, the notion of practicality is intended to stop any fundamental changes to the global system of coloniality and its exploitative economic structural arrangements. We must insist on our ideals and draw inspiration from the suffering of people. More than ever, consciousness is a crucial arena of struggle for liberation. This is our arena. We need to first decolonise our own consciousness to produce liberatory knowledge to support workers, peasants, students, the urban poor, and indigenous peoples to construct a more humane world. Some of us in academia have reproduced myths for domination, while others are trying to produce knowledge in struggle with the people.[20]

The second contribution, **Feminist Research and Civil Society Engagement as Scholactivism: The Case of the Women and Memory Forum in Egypt** by Hala Kamal, provides us with an insightful discussion of 'scholactivism,' that is, feminist knowledge productions in Arabic and entangled practices of translation, academic publishing and archival repositories by the Egypt-based Women and

19 Alvarez Castillo, this volume.
20 Alvarez Castillo 2017, 446–47.

Memory Forum (WMF). Hala Kamal situates her writing on feminist activism in its civil society location and rights discourses, where translation from and into the Arabic language significantly impacts the circulation and transformation of feminism as theory, and gender as both critical concept and analytical tool. Situated at the intersection of feminist scholarship, activism and knowledge production, informed by Edward Said's concern with the processes and effects of 'travelling theory,' and with reference to Hoda Elsadda's observations on the consequences of the translocation of international human rights discourses in Arab contexts, Hala Kamal focuses on the journey of feminism and gender in the Arab world, as well as across academia and civil society. The main argument here is that translation plays a significant role of mediation in the transportation and transformation of feminist and gender discourses, and hence in the production of feminist knowledge for social change. She argues that through (feminist) translation, feminist theory is not simply relocated in Arabic language and discourses but undergoes a journey that both transforms this Western theory during its passage and produces feminist theory and knowledge in Arabic. Civil society, as represented here by WMF, is shown by Hala Kamal as a site of knowledge production and a space which, as much as it introduces feminist thought to academic work, also injects feminist activism with scholarship, travelling across scholarship and activism, as well as beyond academia and civil society. The translated texts, in turn, occupy a new position as a site of intersecting scholarship and activism, and a manifestation of the way academics can play a direct role in promoting social justice – specifically gender justice – through translation, she explains.

Taking us to the field of critical social sciences in Morocco, the second case study from the MENA region, written by Salim Hmimnat, highlights research methodological and ethical issues arising from undertaking empirical field research in challenging contexts where critical social sciences are considered of less value and significance compared with other fields of knowledge. In **Pragmatic Research, Critical Knowledge and Political Relevance: A Self-Reflexive Perspective**, Salim Hmimnat draws on a reflexive exploration of his research experience concerning power, religion and security in Morocco, framed by an intertwined matrix of state discursive hegemony and geopolitical interests (i.e. '*la raison d'état*,' 'the global war on terror'). He identifies some coping strategies in relation to questions of accessibility, positionality and networking with the aim to produce a research-based knowledge at once of added critical value and socio-political relevance for the decision-maker. In a challenging academic environment, the 'pragmatic' researcher in the global South, Hmimnat argues, is arguably exhorted to formulate a grounded, context-sensitive research agenda that forges a fine equilibrium between in-depth critical knowledge and political relevance. Regardless of its potential pitfalls and implications, such a delicate

equilibrium would endow critical social knowledge with a performative legitimacy that would make it possible to recognise its vital worth and ensure its further growth and sustainability over the long term, Hmimnat highlights.

Shifting from one regional space, MENA, to a country sometimes positioned as in Central or South Asia, Afghanistan, Susanne Schmeidl, in **Whose Stories, Whose Voices, Whose Narratives? Challenging the Western Gaze on Afghanistan – Exploring Ethical Knowledge Co-Production in Afghanistan**, provides us with a third self-reflexive, exploratory account by a global North scholar, now based in Australia (a settler colonial context), who has worked closely with Afghan 'knowledge brokers' in community-based collaborative action research contexts in Afghanistan for extended periods of time. Based on her experience of collaborative research with two grassroots organizations in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2014, as well as subsequent engagement with young Afghan researchers, Susanne Schmeidl explores questions around knowledge production in Afghanistan and the role of external (white) researchers and their interactions with the stories told by (or data of) others, local researchers and knowledge brokers. One key spotlight is the often implicit expectation of 'locals' to produce stories, and for the white researcher to make sense of stories, rather than to appreciate the process as collective sense-making and knowledge co-production. Adding to this, Susanne Schmeidl questions not only the emphasis of Western epistemology on the written word over oration, but also the domination of a foreign language such as English in an intensive state-building context such as Afghanistan, which functions as a form of colonising knowledge production (borrowing here from Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o).[21] Taking her cue from her experience and work within anti-colonial lenses, she explores (1) how Indigenous methodologies might facilitate the process of knowledge co-production; (2) how knowledge co-production could be achieved when working with oral cultures; and (3) how this was practised in the context of a local research organisation and associated learning to navigate power imbalances between local and international researchers to improve co-production over extractive research. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith highlights in her seminal book on decolonising methodologies (in its third edition by 2021):

> The intellectual project of decolonizing has to set out ways to proceed through a colonizing world. It needs a radical compassion that reaches out, that seeks collaboration, and that is open to possibilities that can only be imagined as other things fall into place. Decolonizing Methodologies is not a method for revolution in a political sense but provokes some

21 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1986.

> revolutionary thinking about the roles that knowledge, knowledge production, knowledge hierarchies and knowledge institutions play in decolonization and social transformation.[22]

Adding to the discussion on alternative, decolonising and decentring practices are Fathima Nizaruddin's reflections and explorations in **Academic *Tamasha* and Its Limits under the Shadow of Authoritarianism**, conceptualised from the position of and sharing personal experiences as a critical scholar from India, entangled with global North collaborations and encounters. Even as academia produces discourses on liberatory possibilities, its structures of power remain largely centred in the hands of heterosexual white men from privileged backgrounds in the global North, Fathima Nizaruddin asserts. The proverbial dead white men exist in the hallowed corners of academia at perfect ease with their living counterparts, who can produce erudite accounts of postcolonial or feminist theory within structures where the entry of any kind of outsiders will be as difficult as that of the camel through the eye of a needle, she stresses. Within the heavily policed infrastructures of academia, even the outsiders generally have privileges such as class or caste to turn their work into saleable academic concepts with the magic wand of citation metrics. In such a scenario, she explores the possibility of using the South Asian notion of *tamasha* as a framework to navigate the tricky terrain of academia. *Tamasha* here refers to an attitude that draws from the word's connotation as a joke or perverse entertainment;[23] approaching academia through such a framework would be an act of participation with an amount of self-derision which questions the very legitimacy of its codes and structures. Fathima Nizaruddin further explores the limitations of 'doing *tamasha*' when faced with authoritarian repression as in the case of contemporary India, and the hegemonic discourses and practices for critical researchers to navigate, part of a wider matrix of asymmetries, marginalisations, silences and exclusions within the existing geopolitics of knowledge productions.

Continuing our journey with fellow travellers concerned with concrete decolonial practices of research methods and research ethics, Abida Bano takes us to the 'peripheries' of postcolonial Pakistan in her discussion paper, titled **Hegemony and Decolonising Research Praxis: A Researcher's Journey in the Peripheries of Pakistan**. As a scholar of peace and conflict as well as gender studies based in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, she reflects on her experiences and observations in navigating and negotiating hegemonic practices and discourses when engaged in fieldwork-based decolonial knowledge

22 Smith 2021, xii.
23 Nizaruddin 2017.

productions. For Abida Bano, decolonising research methodologies discourses pose vital epistemological questions such as 'who, how, and when' to knowledge production, questions which are critical to understanding the underlying power dynamics and politics of research. However, research methodologies standardised in the global North do not adequately speak to the complexities of research in the peripheries of Pakistan, while prevalent research practices are counter-intuitive to Indigenous knowledge production. Hegemonic research practices, ranging from university research bodies to fieldwork, are a barrier to the free flow of young researchers' ability to conceive original research ideas and pursue them, she argues. Grey zones of social research methodologies, informed by colonial legacies, are further muddied by 'elitism' within the community of researchers in Pakistan.[24] Ironically, most established researchers seem to be oblivious to their role in recreating the colonial research culture of 'othering.' Subsequently, Abida Bano explores the hegemonic research practices that prevail in Pakistani academia and their impact on researchers and their contributions to Indigenous knowledge production through a number of vignettes. These vignettes document reflexive accounts by herself and fellow researchers of several encounters with 'researchers in the field' to demonstrate how researchers navigate overarching hegemonic discourses and practices and how this affects their career prospects as well as their contributions to the wider 'field(s)' of academic knowledge production.

In **A Political Ecology of Remembering for Dayaks of Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo**, June Rubis highlights that remembering can be a powerful political decolonial act. Remembering can also be an act of survivance and refusal. Through the framework of political ecology of remembering, she reflects on the different types of remembering, including '*contra-remembering*' in relation to native customary domains that are also orang utan conservation landscapes in Sarawak, Malaysia Borneo. June Rubis suggests *contra-rememberings* are one of the ways that speak towards continuance and thriving of Indigenous presence(s) over and against conservation forces and actions on native lands. Furthermore, she proposes how *contra-remembering* with Indigenous interlocutors/theorists may lead to decolonising political ecology.

The final chapter of Part Two is by Muhammad Salman Khan, Sarah Holz and Andrea Fleschenberg, tandem partners of the hybrid Working Group R*esearching Asia in Pandemic Times*, set up at HU/IAAW from 2020 to late 2022 in response to the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on academic practices, spaces, encounters and concerns of decolonial, feminist ethics of care. As an exploratory

24 See also Fleschenberg 2023.

chapter, **Researching South Asia in Pandemic Times – Of Shifting Fields, Research Tools, Risks, Emotions and Research Relationships** documents an interdisciplinary, transregional, research-based learning initiative, bringing together early career researchers operating from divergent positionalities towards their intellectual engagements with South Asia during the pandemic. The authors discuss some key challenges, themes and shared experiences as well as practices developed to negotiate interdisciplinary, decentred, critical approaches of context-sensitive knowledge productions amid the pandemic, cognisant of local geographies, in epistemic, methodological and research ethical terms. What are pandemic-specific manifestations and ramifications for knowledge productions and research relationships, and how can they be navigated and negotiated? How can one identify and read pandemic implications in terms of divergent notions and intersectional differences of 'risk,' 'crisis,' 'exposure' and 'vulnerabilities'? Furthermore, what are the long-term legacies and opportunities of the pandemic, such as a potential digital turn in terms of negotiating the 'field,' for (re)reading the available canon and rethinking research methods and ethics? Salman Khan, Sarah Holz and Andrea Fleschenberg also include thoughts on opportunities and cleavages in terms of digital mentoring initiatives, academic writing and fieldwork-oriented research relationships within and beyond the global North–South divide.[25]

These are just some of the most striking examples and illustrations of how the contributions assembled here provide a wide range of diverse takes and approaches to addressing inequality in academia, as a researcher in (or coming from) neglected and marginalised regions for which it has become common to use the generalising and often confusing term 'global South.' This is indeed a bottom line that applies to this volume on the whole: it is a joint endeavour about the dedicated exercise of questioning, exploring and interrogating further the possibilities of finding and coining fruitful approaches, takes and thoughts on how to substantially and seriously engage with Southern theory and intellectual traditions – within all limitations – and more so, how to develop patterns and practices of dealing with constraints and (nevertheless) facilitating insights. In these chapters, we are being made aware of a whole range of relevant and pressing specific aspects and matters that need to be engaged with, by researchers with their respective specific interests, qualifications and positionalities, for the sake of shaping and cultivating research that is sensitive and appropriate. In this way, these contributions map specific, concrete and (promising) workable pathways of research that may call itself 'decolonial' in constructive terms, with specific and

25 See Fleschenberg and Castillo 2022.

substantial yet clearly delineated contributions to make. It is in their overlapping and intersecting partial, distinct and delineated togetherness, in which readers are getting to view them here, that a vision for more possibilities of such kinds of specific and constructive work of decolonising arises.

Bibliography

Abimbola, Seye. 2019. "The Foreign Gaze: Authorship in Academic Global Health." *BMJ Global Health* 4, no. 5 (October): e002068.

Alatas, Syed Hussein. 2002. "The Development of an Autonomous Social Science Tradition in Asia: Problems and Prospects." *Asian Journal of Social Sciences* 30, no. 1: 150–57.

Alvarez Castillo, Fatima. 2017. "Consciousness: The Arena of Struggle Today: Response to 'Frantz Fanon and the Decolonial Turn in Psychology: From Modern/Colonial Methods to the Decolonial Attitude' by Nelson Maldonado-Torres." *Sabinet. South African Journal of Psychology* 47, no. 4: 446–47. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC-c23d07b7f.

Chilisa, Bagele. 2019. *Indigenous Research Methodologies*. 2nd edition. London: SAGE.

Bano, Abida, Rosa Castillo, Sarah Holz, and Andrea Fleschenberg, eds. 2022/23. "Negotiating Research Ethics in Volatile Contexts." Special double issue, *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 54, no. 1 and 53, no. 4.

Castillo, Rosa Cordillera A. 2023. "Critical Research Ethics as Decolonial Praxis: Current Debates" *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 54, no. 1: 21–25.

Castillo, Rosa Cordillera A., June Rubis, and Antony George Pattathu. 2023. "Critical Research Ethics as Decolonial Praxis." *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 54, no. 1: 21–37.

Cusicanqui, Silvia Rivera. 2020. *Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Docot, Dada. 2022. "Dispirted Away: The Peer Review Process." *POLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 45, no. 1: 124–28.

Fleschenberg, Andrea. 2023. "Reflecting Critical Knowledge Production and Social Sciences within an (Inter-)National, Decentred Research Cooperation on 'Ideas, Issues, and Questions of Nation-Building in Pakistan'." In *Pakistan at 75*, eds. Andrea Fleschenberg, Sarah Holz and Arslan Waheed, 263–304. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Fleschenberg, Andrea, and Rosa Castillo. 2022. "Negotiating Research Ethics in Volatile Contexts." *International Quarterly for Asian Studies* 53, no. 4: 495–503.

Grosfoguel, Ramon. 2012. "Decolonising Western Uni-versalisms: Pluri-versalism from Aimé Césaire to the Zapatistas." *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1, no. 3: 88–104.

Hountondji, Paulin. 1990. "Scientific Dependence in Africa Today." *Research in African Literatures* 21: 5–15.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. 2016. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Deconoliality." http://caribbeanstudiesassociation.org/docs/Maldonado-Torres_Outline_Ten_Theses-10.23.16.pdf, accessed August 4, 2023.

Mbembe, Achille. 2016. "Decolonising the University: New Directions." *Arts & Humanities in Higher Education* 15, no. 1: 29–45.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 2003. "Race, Multiculturalism, and Pedagogies of Dissent." In *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, 190–217. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Moosavi, Leon. 2020. "The Decolonial Bandwagon and the Dangers of Intellectual Decolonisation." *International Review of Sociology* 30, no. 2: 332–54.

Moosavi, Leon. 2023. "Turning the Decolonial Gaze towards Ourselves: Decolonising the Curriculum and 'Decolonial Reflexivity' in Sociology and Social Theory." *Sociology* 57, no. 1: 137–56.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo. 2017. "Decolonising Research Methodology Must Include Undoing Its Dirty History." *The Conversation*, September 26, 2017. https://theconversation.com/decolonising-research-methodology-must-include-undoing-its-dirty-history-83912.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. 1986. *Decolonising the Mind*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Nizaruddin, Fathima. 2017. "Peaceful Nuclear Tests, Eco-Friendly Reactors, and the Vantage Point of *Tamasha*." *Bioscope* 8, no. 2: 204–23.

Nyamnjoh, Francis B. 2017. *Drinking from the Cosmic Gourd: How Amos Tutuola Can Change Our Minds*. Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa Research & Publishing CIG.

Quijano, Aníbal. 2007. "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2: 168–78.

Richardson, Eugene T. 2019. "On the Coloniality of Global Public Health." *MAT. Medicine Anthropology Theory* 6, no. 4: 101–18.

The River and Fire Collective. 2021. "The Fires within Us and the Rivers We Form by the River and Fire Collective." *Teaching Anthropology* 10, no. 4: 92–109.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 2021. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Bloomsbury.

Taiwo, Olufemi. 2022. *Against Decolonisation: Taking African Agency Seriously*. London: Hurst.

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

Wynter, Sylvia. 2003. "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, after Man, its Overrepresentation–An Argument." *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3: 257–337.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1999. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London: Verso.