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Decolonising education at Palacký University Olomouc

Bachelor's thesis

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Zásady pro vypracování

Universities play a central role in knowledge production. The curricula of universities in the Global North and Global South have been criticised by some scholars for their Eurocentric character. Eurocentrism points to ethnocentric discrimination stemming from a universal belief in the objectivity and rationality of modern science. Such a belief manifests itself in various forms, such as development policies. The scholars highlighting this issue deem universities as institutions that do not allow knowledge other than Western modernism thus continuing the replication of colonial practices. In this thesis, I explore Eurocentrism at Palacký University, also looking at the *Palacký University Olomouc Strategic Plan for Educational and Creative Actiivties for the Period 2021+* and the Bachelor's programme of International Development Studies, which I am finishing the same year in which I am writing this thesis.

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Abstract

The main aim of the thesis is to analyse the educational strategy of Palacký University in Olomouc for local and foreign students. For methodology was used data collection from literature, articles and texts of experts in the relevant topic was used in the work. I chose the topic of thesis because of my personal interest in cultural equality and equity. The universities whose influence I focus on in my thesis represent centres for the dissemination of Eurocentric cultural awareness. In the first part, I provide a general description of Eurocentrism, types of epistemic oppression, and then discuss and describe Eurocentric paradigms from the perspectives of science and modernity, philosophy and gender. The second part contains an analytical part where I analyze the educational strategy of Palacký University whether it contains Eurocentric elements. The research shows that while universities are globally multicultural they are not intercultural.

Abstrakt

Stěžejním cílem práce je analyzovat strategii vzdělání Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci. V práci byla použita metodika sběru dat z odborné literatury, článků a textů odborníků v příslušné tématice. Téma BP jsem zvolila z důvodu o osobního zájmu v oblasti kulturní rovnosti a spravedlnosti. Univerzity, jejichž vlivem se v BP zabývám představují centra pro šíření kulturního povědomí eurocentrismu. V první části se zabývám obecným popisem eurocentrismu, typy epistemické oprese a dále rozebírám eurocentrická paradigmata z pohledu vědy a modernity, filosofie a genderu. Druhá část obsahuje analytickou část, kde analyzuji edukační strategii Univerzity Palackého, zda obsahuje Eurocentrické prvky. Z výzkumu vychází že univerzity jsou sice globálně multikulturní avšak nejsou interkulturní.

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Introduction

The *process* of decolonising liberates marginalised cultures from the hegemony of European culture. *Decoloniality* emerged as a critique of the failure to address coloniality through decolonisation (the process of establishing states independent from their respective colonisers), and it calls for *epistemic (knowledge) decolonisation*. Hence, the terms colonisation/decolonisation and coloniality/decoloniality differ in meaning. The first refers to a geopolitical project of the 19th century, whereas the second emerges with the activity of decolonising knowledge after decolonisation proved unsuccessful in liberating colonised people (Maldonado-Torres, 2016).[1] During colonisation, indigenous peoples did not only lose land (Peluso & Lund, 2011, 672) but also their languages and traditional knowledge tied to their land. European culture, assuming the existence of a single centre from which to understand the world, placed itself hegemonically (Eurocentrically) at the centres of other knowledge traditions (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2005, 63–69). Colombian-American scholar Arturo Escobar (2018, 94) defines *Eurocentrism* as 'a hegemonic representation and mode of knowing that claims universality for itself, derived from Europe's claimed position as the center'. Even after decolonisation, the belief in European superiority continues to violate indigenous cultures through the domination of Eurocentric social structures and institutions (including universities, nation-state, capitalism, and development) (see, e.g., de Sousa Santos et al., 2022; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). The process of coloniality is thus still ongoing. Global social justice is conditional upon global epistemic justice (de Sousa Santos, 2014). Epistemic injustice at universities plays a significant role in reproducing Eurocentric power imbalances. *Decolonising education* is parallel to making it *intercultural* (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In the process of decolonising education, universities across the world, highly internationalised yet culturally uniform, are to become localised *pluriversities* (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

Recent student-led protest initiatives such as *Why is My Curriculum White?*, *Rhodes Must Fall,* and *Fees Must Fall* have called for a non-Eurocentric, non-discriminatory higher

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[1] Decoloniality was first conceptualised in 1990 by the Peruvian scholar Aníbal Quijano, who still called it decolonisation (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, 120). Many scholars continue to use the terms decolonisation and decoloniality interchangeably.

education system (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). Based in the UK, the *Why is My Curriculum White?* campaign highlighted the centrality of 'white ideas' and 'white scholars' in university curricula, with whiteness being understood not as a race but as an ideology (Peters, 2015). The *Rhodes Must Fall* and the *Fees Must Fall* protests took place in South Africa in 2015 and 2016, and they soon inspired students in other world universities, giving birth to similar movements at universities in both the historically colonised and colonising countries. The *Rhodes Must Fall* campaign demanded and eventually achieved the removal of the statue of Cecil Rhodes – a famous British colonialist – from the University of Cape Town campus (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017). The campaign inspired the Oxford-based initiative of the same name, which called for the Cecil Rhodes statue removal from one of the Oxfordian University Colleges (Knudsen & Andersen, 2019). The *Fees Must Fall* movement in South Africa, unified at the national level, pointed out the neo-liberal free-market exclusionary character of universities (Chinguno, 2017). In addition to the mentioned and similar movements, scholars have also attempted to bring the issue of Eurocentric universities to the fore in their publication activity.

The present study aims to raise awareness of Eurocentrism and inspire action to address ongoing Eurocentrism-driven intercultural inequalities reproduced in and through academia. First, I will summarise theories that discuss Eurocentrism and the Eurocentric higher education system. I then examine whether there are any signs of Eurocentric education at Palacký University. Subsequently, I propose possible solutions to the Eurocentric elements revealed by my analysis.

The thesis begins with a theoretical framework of concepts connected to the research problem, followed by a chapter on methodology. As a following step, I look at the *Palacký University Olomouc Strategic Plan for Educational and Creative Activities for the Period 2021+*. I use the discussion part to further elaborate upon my findings and reflect on the limitations of my work and my positionality.

1 Theoretical Framework

In the theoretical framework, I introduce some concepts related to the topic of my thesis. The individual concepts and sub-chapters should not be read selectively because they support each other in my argumentation. I introduce the concept of culture, recognising its constructed nature. Then I explain how European culture is hegemonic.

1.1   Culture and Eurocentrism

To define culture, we must first look at the nature of the human species. To do so, I adopt the scientific point of view because both the concept of 'man' and 'culture' (a sub-category of man) derive meaning from it. Although taken for granted by science, 'man' is an artificial category laid down by ancient Greek philosophers. In particular, Christianity, Enlightenment philosophers, and finally, modern scientists further shaped the concept (see Alam, 1983, 25–26). Later in this thesis, I show that the idea of 'man' is part of European scientific *epistemology (knowledge),* with other epistemologies not recognising the same phenomenon.

According to the scientific evolution theory, humans distinguish themselves from other species by bipedalism, increased brain size, and behavioural flexibility (Swimme & Tucker, 2011). The appearance of the third of these human attributes – flexible behaviour – was especially groundbreaking, allowing humans to consciously reflect on what they experienced. That reflexivity meant the ability to wonder about things, although at the cost of diminished animal instinct. For instance, fear in a dangerous situation did not cause us (humans) to immediately flee because we could experience wonder over that situation. With this consciousness, we soon started to use symbols – both in spoken and written form – which enabled us to pass our thoughts among ourselves and from generation to generation. As the process of sharing and storing knowledge was place-specific, what is today called *cultural diversity* emerged (Swimme & Tucker, 2011).

The rest of my work intends to undermine the scientific paradigm by illustrating how the concepts of 'nature/place' and 'man/culture' were constructed by one of the place-specific human groups (European culture) and historically made no sense to others, despite Europe's claim for the objectivity and universality of its epistemology (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, 160). Beginning this paragraph, I no longer speak from the scientific perspective

(although I continue to use its language and arguments for deriving knowledge in the process of doing this research).

Place and culture do not have to be conceptualised only Eurocentrically, but their meanings can be shaped. They can be used as strategic concepts in the struggle for epistemic justice (Escobar, 2001). Places are constructed by humans based on the everyday experience of their location. The perception of a place in indigenous cultures differs from the one invented by Europe. According to many of them, the place and they (the people) constantly influence each other, which makes them indistinguishable. A place is a culture, and vice versa (Escobar, 2001). Braidotti (2018) calls it a *natureculture* continuum. Places are in danger of erasure because European culture continues to claim dominance over them, seeing them as universal *space* inhabited by universal rational men. Indigenous peoples actively defend *their places* (calling for the natureculture continuum) because they depend on them to the extent that makes them inseparable. Clearly, the nature-culture division is not applicable in their conception of place (Escobar, 2001).

The process of erasing places is what sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2014) calls *hegemonic globalisation*:

> Hegemonic globalization can be defined as the process by which a given local phenomenon – be it the English language, Hollywood, fast food, and so on – succeeds in extending its reach over the globe and, by doing so, develops the capacity to designate a rival social phenomenon as local.

British sociologist Gurminder K. Bhambra (2007) defines *Eurocentrism* as 'the belief, implicit or otherwise, in the world historical significance of events believed to have developed endogenously within the cultural-geographical sphere of Europe'. The Eurocentric superiority thus stems from the construction of Europe as an autonomous cultural unit and the claimed universality of its knowledge. Enlightenment philosophers are usually regarded as the founders of Eurocentric thinking because they promoted the idea of modern science and scientific discovery, which relies on a *subject*'s ability to reason and describe *objects – 'objectively'* (Mbembe, 2016). As Bhambra writes (2007, 35–36), the Enlightenment philosophers saw the theories of Newton and Boyle as the beginning of a new era marked by the shift from religion to reason and science. In science, reason is separated from the senses and deemed a universal source of knowledge. The

nature-culture division came hand in hand with the body-mind (feeling-reasoning) dichotomy. Nature, followed by the human world (culture), became an object, whose principles could be universally discovered and described (Bhambra, 2007, 35–36).

I see Eurocentric culture as including both Europe and North America because the latter, when colonised by European colonisers, launched its own imperial practice based on the Eurocentric idea of universal science (de Sousa Santos, 2014). Instead of referring to the Global North and South or the West and the Third World, I follow feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) and speak about 'One-Third World' and 'Two-Thirds World'.[2] 'One-Third World' stands for a privileged social minority, while 'Two-Thirds World' represents a social majority whose quality of life is diminished compared to the remaining third. The inhabitants of both worlds can live anywhere in the real world. This categorisation that builds on the quality of life, although not avoiding certain simplifications, better reflects the dynamics of current global inequalities without misleading 'geographical and ideological binarism' (Mohanty, 2003).

1.2 Intercultural Translation and Epistemic Injustice

In the present study, even if I deny the universality of European culture and thus the concepts of 'Europe' and 'culture' as such, I still operate with the concepts aligned with European perception of the world. This is because if I am to explain the weaknesses of the claim for the universality of European narratives to people who see the world according to these narratives, it is inescapable to formulate the critique in the same language the people 'inside the paradigm' communicate.

By language, I do not mean just spoken or written language but also body language, silences, and various cultural ways of living and organising. Language is an expression of knowledge. Knowledge also includes arguments for deriving knowledge in a given culture, which are part of cultural-specific premises of argumentation.

To deconstruct our knowledge, we must listen to people of different cultures. To do so accurately, without forcing our argumentation on it, we must engage in *intercultural dialogues*. The tool for intercultural dialogue is *intercultural translation.* However, even

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[2] The division was originally articulated by Esteva and Prakash (1998).

if we translate as precisely as possible, there is always inherent epistemic injustice in translation, favouring the side whose language it is translated to (de Sousa Santos, 2014).

Intercultural dialogue is practised through listening with patience and respect to people of a distinct culture from ours, whereby equal conditions are created by and for the dialogue partners (Kimmerle, 2004). In the process of intercultural translation, which enables intercultural dialogue, we can maintain our arguments, but we must be willing to understand the arguments of the second culture, challenging our premises of argumentation. Intercultural translation into a common language gives rise to new premises of argumentation, which are specific to a contact zone between the two cultures (de Sousa Santos, 2014). These new premises of argumentation are based on intercultural philosophy. *Intercultural philosophy* implies 'negotiating one's own identity and the other's in a jointly constructed new situation for which neither of the two identities has fully prepared either of the participants in that new situation' (Mosima, 2022, 9). The goal of intercultural dialogue is not to arrive at a consensus or universal truth (Kimmerle, 2004). Instead, intercultural dialogue strives for respect for cultural diversity, recognising the different philosophies that exist. That said, cultures are in no way static. Instead, they are overlapping social constructs to be deconstructed in the process of dialogue, giving birth to intercultural philosophy (Mall, 2016). There are also dialogues inside cultures, though intracultural dialogues are harder to track. Also, we often perceive the struggles for decoloniality, which is the subject of this thesis, at the level of cultural units (de Sousa Santos, 2014).

One problem of intercultural translation is that by translation, as already mentioned, we abstract one's knowledge by 'knowing' it in our language, thus creating epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustice arises when one culture can engage in a dialogue with another culture but cannot discuss the terms in which the dialogue is led because its knowledge is always formulated only in the other culture's language (de Sousa Santos, 2014). Europeans usually do not master the languages of indigenous cultures very well. Consequently, intercultural translation commonly occurs as the translation of indigenous languages into English and other (post-)colonial hegemonic languages mastered by the 'previously' colonised. To challenge the epistemic injustice favouring European languages, Europe has to start engaging with marginalised cultures in both their native

languages and their translated versions. When translating, we must explicitly acknowledge the epistemic injustice we create (de Sousa Santos, 2014).

As de Sousa Santos (2014) argues: 'there is no global social justice without global cognitive [epistemic] justice'. Mignolo & Walsh (2018, 135) also note that 'it is through knowledge that entities and relations are conceived, perceived, sensed, and described'. Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2005, 68) puts the goal of epistemic justice as follows: 'It is [...] not really a question of studying that which is removed from ourselves [...] but rather one of understanding all the voices coming from what is essentially a plurality of centres all over the world'. Intercultural dialogue and intercultural philosophy, in fact, are ethical only when acknowledging epistemic (in)justice (see Mosima, 2022).

A practice that is less demanding than the effort for epistemic justice is systematic work with the terminology of the European hegemonic languages to undermine it. For instance, adjectives can be used to change the meaning of nouns (de Sousa Santos, 2014). A case in point is 'development', which transformed into 'alternative development' (and subsequently into 'alternatives to development'). Apart from adjectives, there are other ways of working with English. Terms like de-growth, customary law, or decoloniality, are all such examples.

1.3   Three Types of Epistemic Oppression

Miranda Fricker, in her famous book (2007), divides epistemic injustice into testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. However, we agree with Dotson (2014), who shows that these are not epistemic injustices as such. Instead, she sees testimonial, hermeneutical, and epistemic injustice as three types of 'epistemic oppression'. The first – *testimonial injustice* – is caused by prejudices based on denying someone the role of knowledge producer. Fricker (2007) gives an example of the police not believing someone after considering their skin colour. The second, *hermeneutical injustice* – the term coming from hermeneutics (which studies interpretation) – concerns the justice of names (or absence of names) for a phenomenon in different cultures. An example could be when a woman suffers sexual harassment in a culture which lacks this critical name, so she cannot easily explain her experience to others (Fricker, 2007). Hermeneutical intercultural injustice can be removed by intercultural translation. Let us say that one culture calls a phenomenon

'capitalism' and another culture translates it as 'extractivism'. To do hermeneutical injustice justice, we must acknowledge both names for the single phenomenon.

The third type of epistemic oppression – *epistemic injustice* – cannot be eliminated by simply starting to respect equivalents of another cultural knowledge because it requires one party to add previously unknown phenomena into its vocabulary. Dotson (2014) illustrates it with the help of Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave'. All prisoners are fixed inside the cave, unable to move, and can see only shadows of the real world projected on the wall by a fire. Nevertheless, they take different positions within the cave, so if one of the prisoners has a unique experience based on her position, it will be hard for others to equalise this knowledge with knowledge based on collective experience (Dotson, 2014). Epistemic injustice cannot be reduced by simply engaging in intercultural translation. Epistemic injustice recognises that any universal phenomena to be known and named by various cultural alternatives do not exist because each culture constructs its own unique phenomena.

1.4   Critical Posthumanities and Cartographies

Because I engage with epistemic oppression, I cannot omit the fact that I deal only with human knowledge in the present study. Posthuman scholars strive to go beyond the European idea of a human. *Critical posthumanities* were laid down by a feminist continental philosopher Rosi Braidotti (2019), the modifier 'critical' highlighting the need to deconstruct the residua of human-centrism that scholars from the field of posthumanities often leave out. According to critical posthumanities, human exceptionalism (human with the ability to reason) is nothing but a Eurocentric/anthropocentric idea rooted in the hierarchical dualism of body-mind, animal-human, and nature-culture. Consequently, no such thing as human exceptionalism exists because other living and non-living entities are equally intelligent beings. The knowing subjects are not men exclusively but also women, animals, nature, matter, and those in between the categorical binaries of men/women, men/animals, nature/culture, and life/matter (Braidotti, 2019).

Braidotti (2019) calls all the abovementioned *missing people* and the knowledge they produce a 'vital, neo-materialist epistemology'. She proposes a monistic perception of

the world in which all missing people formulate knowledge, not just the 'human species'.[3] Knowledge is always complete, dwelling in a non-linear time-continuum, but it unveils to all knowers in fragments of knowledge; therefore, it manifests as always incomplete and actualising (Braidotti, 2019. When Einstein saw the consequences of his invention of the bomb, he regretted it, stating: 'If I had known I would never have thought it' (see Davis & Braidotti, 2016). Critical thinking implies actualising the present – what we are ceasing to be and what we are in the process of becoming. To do so ethically, we cannot consider ourselves the only knowledge creators because the missing people also know and think. The fact that knowledge is ever-changing and always fragmental does not mean a fall into relativism if we track how it became known, thinking critically of power structures that shaped it and 'drawing' them as *cartographies*. As with all knowledge, any cartography is always selective, whether drawn by European science, critical posthumanities, or other discourses. However, cartographies help us understand our place in the world and be creative in shaping the future (Braidotti, 2019).

Many indigenous cultures perceive the world in a relational way, living close to the Earth and thinking with the *zoe* (the non-human) (Braidotti, 2019). Therefore, intercultural justice is essential to critical posthumanities, dismissing the hegemonic anthropocentric tradition of Europe. Having said that, intercultural philosophy still points to the justice of human epistemic traditions (by referring to culture) and excludes non-humans, emphasised by critical posthumanities. Braidotti argues for a turn from linguistic thinking towards materialist thinking with the zoe (Davis & Braidotti, 2016). In the current age of fast technological progress, what do all the newly created materials and technologies think? What are they ceasing to be, and what are they in the process of becoming? (Braidotti, 2019).

In the present study, although I concentrate on decolonising cultures and establishing intercultural justice, I find the call of critical posthumanities to replace the nature-culture dichotomy with a *naturecultures* continuum essential (Braidotti, 2019). It is, essentially, the call to decolonise nature. Critical posthumanities are necessary for intercultural

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[3] Monism is an understanding of the world as consisting of one substance. Braidotti builds on Baruch Spinoza's monistic philosophy (1632–1677).

philosophy, and intercultural philosophy is necessary but not sufficient for critical posthumanities. Of course, humans and non-humans were colonised in the process of colonialism, global capitalism, and patriarchy (de Sousa Santos, 2017), but in my thesis, the concept of decoloniality deals with humans only. The concept of critical posthumanities is too new for me to embrace all intersectional inequalities in my thesis. Therefore, my cartography is that of intercultural philosophy (and also that of science since I am bound by its language and methodology).

1.5   Intersectionality in Intercultural Inequality

Intersectionality has become a word used in various social projects and study areas concerned with inequalities that intersect the categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality, among many others (Collins, 2015). The idea of intersectionality was pointed out by the US black feminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s. African American women-organised communities, spreading awareness about their experiences of race, class, gender, and sexuality discrimination, highlighted the need for a complex answer to the complex system of injustices. First taking the form of social activism, the idea later entered the academy (although it still had no name), giving birth to new intersectional academic fields, such as women's studies, which allowed scholars from separate disciplines to come together (Collins, 2015). Collins (2015; I also recommend reading a more up-to-date work by Collins et al., 2021) points out how the current overuse of the term intersectionality across a variety of sectors paradoxically has made it fuzzy and less powerful. To arrive at a definition of intersectionality is problematic precisely because of its intersectional nature. That is also why intersectionality is often used without justification for many not truly intersectional activities. The many false intersectional activities are essentially theories rather than active practice. Intersectionality, understood as critical praxis, does not omit the activity part, which is central in dealing with inequalities. Collins (2015) highlights the risk of purely theoretical understanding of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which sets out human rights in separate categories.

In the present study, I use *intersectionality* first as an approach to studying colonial inequalities (although just focusing on humans, as explained in the previous sub-chapter) in the areas of higher education and development studies, acknowledging their multi-

layered character. Second, I apply intersectionality when writing my positionality, reflecting on the identities that I carry with me and their influence on my work.

1.6   Alliance Building and Insurgent Cosmopolitanism

In the present study, whether I speak about culture, race, gender, or other categories in seeking global justice, I recognise that they are constructed. Each of the categories includes some and excludes others. Moreover, when concentrating on the liberation of people of one category, the individuals of that category might not be emancipated at all since different kinds of oppression can intersect one person (Collins, 2015). Because people do not suffer from marginalisation within separate categories but as individuals, the solution lies in creating non-exclusionary alliances integrating the various individuals (de Sousa Santos, 2014). For instance, activists can come together as a strategic regional alliance to defend their local specific territories (places) forming that region. A social movement representing black communities of the Colombian Pacific rainforest follows such a strategy. Although constructing an abstract category of region and highlighting one of the regions – the Pacific rainforest – with a common goal to protect their territories, the ways to achieve this goal are fundamentally locally specific with a focus on a local community and its society (which can also include non-humans in indigenous cultures) (Escobar, 2001). Similarly, feminists from different contexts can join together, not based on gender (the category 'woman' is not universal) but on context-specific historical marginalisation by the same oppressors (the ones who label them women) (Mohanty, 2003). Most importantly, if oppressed people of all different kinds (and their allies from the One-Third World) start to cooperate, they can much more effectively challenge European hegemony that claims global universality for itself and, at the same time, create a respectful, just world of *insurgent cosmopolitanism*, as de Sousa Santos (2014) calls it.

1.7   The Eurocentric Paradigm of Science and Modernity

Historian Thomas Kuhn (1962) introduced the theory of the 'scientific paradigm', according to which science develops thanks to competing schools that succeed each other. There is always, perhaps, a long time frame when a scientific theory stays unchallenged, being considered truth or a 'normal science'. When a competing theory emerges (as it always does), it becomes a normal science itself. Newton's theory of motion succeeded Aristotle's and was later replaced by Einstein's theory of relativity. Kuhn does not see this process as a linear progression towards truth, but he still believes in the power of science

to discover the principles of nature. Hence, while he recognises the ever-present irrationality of scientific knowledge based on the paradigm construction, he continues to place science above other knowledge systems, therefore limiting his search for truth to the Eurocentric *paradigm of science* (de Sousa Santos, 2014; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021, 89).

Modern science is part of the modern era. Invented by European theorists, it plays a central role in the European paradigm of science (Bhambra, 2007). The shift from the 'traditional' to the 'modern' was first conceptualised by the pioneers in sociology – including the 'father of sociology' Comte – who formulated theories about the progressive development of society. The sociologists reflected on the contemporary, early post-Enlightenment times, which they perceived as radically different from what preceded the Renaissance, the French Revolution, and the Industrial Revolution. These revolutions were seen as marking a new era of modern (scientific) thinking, modern (regulatory) state, and modern (industrialised) economy. Authors writing about the turn towards the modern determined, limited by the biases of Eurocentric culture, what is covered, how it is framed, and what stays omitted. Importantly, one large adverse side of the modern commercial society – slavery – was not stressed at all in connection to modernity. Modernism was invented by sociology, which failed to reflect the experience of other cultures when interpreting history (Bhambra, 2007, 48–64).

Modern science builds on the premise that anything validated by reason becomes a fact, and anything experienced through feelings – such as the belief in God – is false. Because science claims this frame of rationality and irrationality to be universal, it posits itself upon other cultures. Yet, it fails to answer the question of why it should be universal. Why should what is argued by reason be the only truth? The single thing indicating that science could be different from other cultural traditions is that it sees itself as different (see, e.g. de Sousa Santos, 2014). Thus, it does not recognise the fact that every culture has its way of knowing (epistemology), being (ontology), and valuing (axiology, ethics) (Mosima, 2022, 12; Chilisa, 2022). Said differently, every culture has its philosophy.

Intercultural philosophy does not imply relativism. While refusing 'modernism' as a part of a universal European hegemonic construct of linear and partial history can seem like a fall into relativism, with cultures unable to discuss any idea in a common language, Bhambra (2007) suggests an alternative to it and proposes the reconstruction of the framework of understanding based on *connected histories* – histories that do not derive

from a singular standpoint, replacing the paradigm of modernity with dialogical construction of reality, thus making a link between previously separated knowledge traditions.[4]

1.8 The Eurocentric Paradigm of Philosophy

Philosophy is traditionally defined as a systematic, rational inquiry into the substance of the world, in the sense of the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021, 82). Kant saw the European continent as the only place where philosophy had ever been practised, so he summarised the history of philosophy from ancient Greece through the Roman Empire to the Enlightenment (Serequeberhan, 2005).[5] He conceived Europe as gradually advancing its knowledge about the world, which, one day, could 'give law to all the others [continents]' (Kant, 1784, as cited in Serequeberhan, 2005, 82). Similarly, for Hegel, and after him, Marx, what originates in Europe is 'modern' and 'real', while other cultures are 'backwards', 'savages', and 'human animals' (Serequeberhan, 2005).[6][7] Later, Edward Said (1978) conceptualised this apparent division as 'othering' or creating 'the Other'. This distinction between Europe and the rest was further stratified – black peoples of Africa were less human than other 'savages' elsewhere outside Europe (Serequeberhan, 2005, 81–82).[8]

To deny Europe the right to its privileged status, we must first acknowledge the interactions that always took place between cultures, such as the exchange of knowledge between ancient Egypt and ancient Sub-Saharan African cultures. Ancient Egypt contributed significantly to ancient Greek civilisation, the latter then rediscovered by Enlightenment philosophers. Therefore, the geographical unit of Europe, with its

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[4] Bhambra takes the concept of 'connected histories' from the historian Subrahmanyam.

[5] Modern philosophers continued to theorise based on the idea of the 'rationality of the man', established in the ethics of Plato and Aristotle (Outlaw, 2005, 165).

[6] Biakolo (2005, 9) writes more on the Eurocentric cultural hierarchy.

[7] Serequeberhan (2005, 83, 81) cites Kant (1786): '[M]an's departure from that paradise which his reason represents as the first abode of his species was nothing but the transition from an uncultivated, merely animal condition to the state of humanity [...]'. Kant (1964) also wrote that: 'Mr. Humes challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents, and asserts that [...] not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praise-worthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble, and through superior gifts earn respect in the world'.

[8] As Franz Fanon (1967, 18) writes, 'the Negro of the Antilles will be proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language'.

philosophy and science, is not a separate world to which other cultures have not contributed their knowledge (Irele, 2005, 51).[9][10] Second, we should extend the definition of philosophy to include diverse ways to reason, not just the European one. The second point is described more deeply in the sub-chapter on Indigenous Epistemologies.

1.9   The Eurocentric Paradigm of Gender

As Mohanty (2003) writes, it is mainly 'women' and 'girls' from the 'Global South' who suffer most from global capitalism. What connects them is not their gender – there are different kinds of gender in the world because gender is a social construct. One-Third World feminists often forget that their 'sisters' from the Two-Thirds World are not 'women' and 'girls' at all, nor are they 'sisters'. European nuclear family with a 'woman', a 'man' (the breadwinner), and 'children' is not a universal model worldwide. A person who is called a 'woman' in the European language might be marginalised but might also be privileged in a given society. In Africa, age is traditionally the primary factor that determines social position. A person called a 'sister' in Europe might be much farther in relation to the person with whom she shares the same parents than to her 'cousins' (Oyewumi, 2002).

A highly elaborated idea of patriarchy – the dualistic, polarised perception of the world – was laid down by Aristotle. His philosophy foregrounded the man-woman hierarchy. Modern science replicates this dualistic perception, mirroring it in social structures. For instance, sociobiology constructs the gender binary based on the prevalent condition in the natural world where the male is the promiscuous active figure seeking the female that just passively chooses among them with no creativity. Accordingly, aggression and violence against women could be somewhat legitimised as the manifested reality of male

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[9] This was demonstrated by the Senegalese theorist Cheikh Anta Diop and further elaborated by others, especially Théophile Obenga (Irele, 2005, 137–138). Also, the Nigerian professor Sophie Oluwole (2014) argues, in her detailed analysis, that Òrúnmìlà, who was living among the Yoruba people of Western Africa at the time of Socrates, practised philosophy in no way less worthy than that of Socrates.

[10] Gradually, philosophy, theology, and essentially the entire field of humanities have been subjected to science in the sense of natural sciences (de Sousa Santos, 2014). Alam (1983, 26) comments on it: '[...] neoplatonic Aristotelian Christian cosmology with its hierarchies in heaven and earth was challenged by and decisively defeated by the new philosophy, which was different variants of mechanical philosophy'.

natural 'activity', whereby dis-respecting female (and other!) 'passive' modes of living (de Sousa Santos, 2017, 75–78).

1.10   Indigenous Epistemologies

Indigenous epistemologies are traditionally found in stories, songs, proverbs, myths, and similar practices, not in the Eurocentric positivist seek for truth. Not being written down but transmitted orally or by practices such as dance and rituals, they are thus fundamentally different from European philosophy and science.[11] Their practice of philosophy does not lie in theorising (Chilisa, 2022). Their epistemologies and ontologies create one world without a delineated theorising subject (Escobar, 2015). Yet indigenous philosophies are based on reason (Ramose, 2003-a). For instance, Africans, when they hear music, they move themselves to the rhythm while creating the emotion of *cosmic harmony*. Although they decide spontaneously, this does not mean their decision is irrational (Ramose, 2003-b). Other types of reasoning do not suit the Eurocentric paradigm of philosophy and science. It is reasoning expressed through practice, not 'neutral' theorising isolated from reality.

The nature-culture division is one of the central ideas of modern philosophy and science. It has a destructive impact on other cultures, for example, in the form of development policies (see Kothari, 2019). Nature is perceived differently in various cultures, and many do not view the natural and human worlds (accompanied by the spiritual world) as strictly separate (Escobar, 2001). Though words like 'community', 'culture', or 'nature' are used in the present study, they should not be deemed universal categories since they might not have equivalents in other cultures. Let us illustrate this on the African philosophy of *ubuntu* of the Zulu and Xhosa peoples of Southern Africa, the principles of which can be found in most indigenous philosophies throughout Sub-Saharan Africa (Van Norren, 2017, 191). The philosophy stands on three legs – people living now (*the living*), their ancestors (*the living dead*) and those who will live in the future (*the yet-to-be-born*) (Ramose, 2005-a). The African 'community' cannot be perceived as just the living; it also entails the ancestors and the yet-to-be-born, establishing *intergenerational solidarity*

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[11] Presbey (1996), for instance, is one of the contributors to the topic of orally transmitted philosophy – the expression of knowledge often disregarded to be a true philosophy.

(Kelbessa, 2021). In Africa, traditionally, the whole universe is the expression of God; therefore, the land is sacred and must be protected for future generations and as the home to spirits and ancestors. Some animals and plants serve as *totems*. Totemism is the belief that humans are spiritually connected with certain animals or plants and respect each other, with different tribals and their members connected to distinct totems (Kelbessa, 2021). Many indigenous traditions are characterised by such interconnectedness, collectively called 'relational ontologies' (Escobar, 2015).

1.11 Coloniality and Decoloniality

The colonisation of indigenous land was de facto legitimised by the 'Doctrine of Discovery' – a series of papal bulls issued in the 15th century – which guaranteed Spain and Portugal the right to possess the lands they 'discovered' as long as they had not yet been under the rule of a Christian king. Other countries later justified the same practices by referring to the Doctrine (Miller, 2019). These colonial states were 'discovering' indigenous lands, considering them empty because they resembled anything similar to European civilisation and because they were not Christian.

Tuck & Yang (2012) distinguish three forms of colonialism. The first is characterised by extracting fragments of indigenous worlds – such as knowledge, materials, animals, plants, and humans (*external colonialism*) – often using military power. The second kind of colonisation involves colonisers attempting to control native people living within the empire, segregating them in prisons, ghettos, reservations, and boarding schools (*internal colonialism*).[12] The third kind of colonialism entails both external and internal colonialism, whereby the colonisers take the land fully from indigenous peoples and make it their home (*settler colonialism*) (Tuck & Yang, 2012).[13] Colonisation was not without cruelty and violence, both physical and epistemic. In his *Necropolitics*, Cameroonian theorist Mbembe (2003) describes processes by which colonisers held native peoples in

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[12] External and internal colonialism are artificial categories. In reality, colonialism comprises a mixture of locally specific and mutually interacting processes (Tuck & Yang, 2012).
[13] An example of a settler colonial state is the United States, where many indigenous peoples have been displaced, segregated, and re-educated (internal colonialism), and, at the same time, fragments of indigenous peoples' land have been extracted (external colonialism) (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

a state of barely living. They were alive, but under the brutality of slavery and colonial occupation, their lives closely resembled death.[14]

The nightmare did not end with decolonisation. Newly independent states have faced adverse effects of the established global political and economic order. Most of the present issues of those states are ascribed, among decolonial scholars, to the worldwide universal application of the European ideas of the nation-state, capitalism, patriarchy, and modern science (see, e.g., de Sousa Santos, 2017; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). In the 19th century, science became the rationale for global capitalism. During decolonisation, the European concept of independent nation-states was applied to the rest of the world. The drawbacks of capitalism and the state have been framed scientifically as either market or political failures and have never been interpreted (in the mainstream) as a failure of capitalism/the state as such (see de Sousa Santos, 2014). The frame of the Eurocentric paradigm of global universality means the continuation of intercultural colonial power imbalances.

These new power imbalances are between capitalism and other kinds of economies and those between the concept of the state and traditional forms of social organisation. After decolonisation, these new global structures gave rise to the formation of the national bourgeois elite, enormous inequalities, corruption, military state and rebel violence, ethnic conflicts, and wars in the 'Global South'. They have also caused violations of indigenous worlds through the commodification of nature, humans, and knowledge; multinational and transnational entrepreneurial/development projects; displacement; loss of customary rights/establishment of ownership rights; and tourism (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

Decolonising, in the title of this thesis, stands for 'making non-Eurocentric', in our case, education. In my thesis, I borrow from Maldonado-Torres (2016), and Mignolo & Walsh (2018), who follow him in distinguishing between *decolonisation* (the geopolitical process taking place in the 19th century) and *decoloniality* (the metaphor pointing out the fragmental nature of the former). Decoloniality highlights that the formal process of decolonisation failed to address the so-called 'colonisation of the mind' (Ngugi wa

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[14] Mbembe builds on Foucalt's concept of *biopolitics*.

Thiong'o, 1981). Besides education, we can also engage in decolonising politics, economics, and other areas.

Decoloniality, similarly to intersectionality, has become a metaphor without practical consequences. Tuck & Yang (2012) argue that with decoloniality becoming a metaphor, the people who were or continue struggling with settler colonialism are losing their right to get their places back. It also implies the so-called 'settler moves to innocence' – the settler-coloniser handing over the responsibility for settler colonialism by pretending decoloniality, often to silence the emotion of blame for it. In my conception of decoloniality, I disregard it as a metaphor and acknowledge that settler decolonisation is fundamental for mental decolonisation because, without the land, indigenous traditions are becoming extinct (given the fact that they are practised in places and – inseparable from nature – by places) (see, e.g., Escobar, 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Simpson, 2014). Decoloniality must not be reduced to theorising about decoloniality. Theorising without practice is not decolonising. In their text on decolonising the university, Bhambra & Gebrial (2020) point out the necessity to draw red lines around decolonisation if it is not to lose its power and become a widespread new concept – yet – inside the same old structures. In my concept of decoloniality, I call for ambitious structural changes, recognising that, as an influential theorist of anti-colonial liberation Franz Fanon (1961) writes: 'decolonisation never goes unnoticed'.

Indeed, decoloniality is a process and a practice, which does not exist without intercultural dialogues and intercultural philosophy (Mosima, 2022). In the process of decolonising, oppressed cultures explore their traditional knowledge. They replace Eurocentric knowledge where it is no longer satisfactory for them, either by their traditional knowledge or by utterly new knowledge arising in the creative process of intercultural dialogue. Poka Laenui (2000, 150–160, cited in Mosima, 2022, 9) identifies five phases present in the course of self-decolonisation – rediscovery and recovery, mourning, dreaming, commitment, and action.

Decoloniality is not universal and still implies epistemic injustice. The South African theoriser Mogobe Ramose calls for *mothofatso* (in South African Zulu) – translated as 're-humanisation of human relations' instead of decoloniality (Ramose, 2020). Other cultures might have their own expressions.

In a given culture, what can be expressed is known, and what is known can be expressed. Enlightenment philosophers assumably played a large role in the legitimation of slavery and racism since they wrote about the difference between the 'foolish', 'irrational', 'uncivilised', 'human-animal savages' and the 'white intellectuals' (Serequeberhan, 2005). Given that white people were so 'different' from the Others, the latter could be treated differently from/by the former. Later, it was not hard for succeeding theorisers to believe that Europe, with all its inventions, discoveries, and advanced science, was the chosen one to help other continents escape human suffering (Serequeberhan, 2005) – a suffering Europeans largely caused by destroying cultures that sustained and gradually evolved for hundreds of years before (see, e.g., Escobar, 1988; Gudynas, 2011; Kelbessa, 2021).

From the colonial era until today, indigenous peoples have been taught the (previous) colonisers' languages. Naturally, it is impossible to express their traditional ideas in those languages. Local sensitivity is what the imposed European hegemony misses when speaking about 'human rights', 'democracy', or 'justice' (de Sousa Santos, 2014). To provide an example illustrating how creating one universal democratic culture is unethical, we borrow from Heinz Kimmerle. He mentions *Mbongi* (in Kikongo, a language spoken in Congo), an indigenous democratic practice based on unanimity in which all community members engage in dialogues with each other until everyone agrees (Kimmerle, 2004, 74–75). Also, Ecuadorian indigenous peoples came up with the idea of a counter-democratic concept. To argue for a *pluriversal state* based on a new kind of democracy that would be intercultural and anti-capitalist (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, 60–61).

1.12   Eurocentric Higher Education

The first universities were founded in Baghdad, Timbuktu, and Cairo around the 10th century and were later replicated in Europe along with their teaching methods (de Sousa Santos et al., 2022; de Sousa Santos, 2017). The shared goal of all the first universities was to form elites, whether religious, political, cultural, or scientific (de Sousa Santos, 2017). In Europe, universities were then developing on a separate route, and during colonisation, colonial powers introduced their university model to the cultures they colonised. European universities were reproduced as universal institutions globally – teaching in modern (colonial) languages about modern issues to develop modern

solutions (de Sousa Santos et al., 2022; de Sousa Santos, 2017). Also, philosophy was presented as universal to students, so they had to study all the white men and their rational theories, even if these were not part of their culture (and continue to do so until today) (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).[15]

Universities are central players in knowledge production and re-production (for illustration see Mungwini, 2022). They are spaces where knowledge is handed over and further shaped by innovative thoughts. Students are taught science according to the contemporary science paradigm, coming up with new innovations inside that paradigm and sometimes from outside of the paradigm (as I am doing in the process of writing this thesis). Any new knowledge coming from universities must be approved by scientific methods.

People come out of university to 'real life', where they manifest their knowledge into social structures. Adversely, being born into these social structures, people come to university. Therefore, the university mirrors what is accepted as knowledge in the society. Because the exact science is taught at universities across the world, where the social context does not correspond, discrimination arises and, with it, oppression. Oppression also occurs inside the European culture itself because science is exclusionary in its claims for universality. Since knowledge is not universal but differs among cultures and inside them, universities produce knowledge that is static and does not reflect people's desires. It becomes an ivory tower, a university in the true sense. The independence and inclusion commonly ascribed to universities are false because universities are epistemically tied to the European hegemonic knowledge paradigm. As I have already mentioned in the part about epistemic injustice, we can think outside of one cultural paradigm, but we need to use its language, in the case of the science paradigm, scientific language, to justify it. Universities are not inclusive as long as there is epistemic injustice.

As I have already partly illustrated, universities were not the only social structure forced on other cultures by Europe, although, notably, the most important one because of their

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[15] Depending on the nationality of the former colonial emperor, universities in some countries include some amount of traditional philosophies. For example, African philosophy is part of the curriculum at universities in previous British and Belgian colonies, but not in former French colonies in Africa.

large role in knowledge reproduction. In the 17th century, universities expanded into the world together with the project of *the state*, which was the project of colonialism (de Sousa Santos et al., 2022). With *global capitalism*, education has become increasingly privatised. With capitalism, education stops existing for society, but it newly works as the entrepreneur of science, which works for the state, which works for profit (de Sousa Santos et al., 2022). In the process, the value of knowledge producers is converted into a commodity with market value to be exchanged (Shahjahan, 2015). The continuing presence of the Oxfordian Cecil Rhodes statue at the university could be, as covered by the media, to some extent driven by a threat of funding cuts for the university (Rawlinson, 2016; Mohdin, 2021). Education became a commodity to be traded, nothing more.

The knowledge presented at universities is not sustained on its own. It is mediated by academics. But when you change the people – when you replace 'white' academics with 'black' academics with minds colonised by the national project of the state, science, capitalism, and development – it does not change the content of what is taught and it replicates the colonial injustice (de Sousa Santos et al., 2022). If some teachers or students are excluded from producing knowledge at university, social inequality is reproduced (Shahjahan, 2014). Therefore, we must ask, who is excluded? How does university exclude?

What matters is not only whose knowledge is included at universities but also how. Is knowledge questioned? Are students encouraged to critical thinking and creativity? Different pedagogies give rise to different knowledge (Wagner, 2005). Pedagogies connected to practice rather than theory enhance creativity. For instance, the pedagogy of dialogue is critical to deconstruct and decolonise (Wagner, 2005).

Universities exclude first, by the scientific and colonial historical tradition of disregarding non-Europeans the possession of the ability to reason the scientific way. The second kind of exclusion, the more important one, is the exclusion of people with different premises of argumentation than scientific methodology. Methodology to derive knowledge also includes specific pedagogies. Shahjahan (2014) gives an example which shows the exclusionary character of scientific pedagogies. 'Unlike Western theories of learning and knowing [...], silence and 'nothingness' are paramount in Eastern philosophies of education' (Shahjahan, 2014, 496). The emphasis on the linguistic content of education is, therefore, not inherent to all cultures. Scientific methodology also presupposes the

linearity of academic time. Academic life is exclusionary because it does not allow people with a non-linear sense of time to be in harmony with themselves and their bodies. Not in all cultures, there is such a thing as a lack of time. Scientific knowledge is produced in a hurry, which excludes some academics and their knowledge (Shahjahan, 2014).

One might also ask, if universities are a scientific idea, should not people of other philosophies, in the process of decoloniality, move outside the university to emancipate themselves? That is exactly what happens right now. There is an exodus of academics to the outside of the university. As Braidotti (Davis & Braidotti, 2016) write, people move to the art world, to private industry where some innovation can happen. But they do so on weekends, in their free time, which is a privatised scarce resource. They cannot delink from the university because their lives depend on it, they are colonised even if their minds might not be. If we were able to create a truly inclusive university encouraging critical thinking of different ways to reason, what would our global society look like? Maybe we would be able to shift from capitalism to other market economies: the commons, indigenous economies, and others (Davis & Braidotti, 2016). Maybe, we would, by the means of intercultural and intracultural dialogues at universities, be able to create the insurgent cosmopolitanism of flourishing lives of individuals.

Methodology

If we were to classify the present study according to the Eurocentric classification of academic disciplines, it falls into the humanities. I am a student in the Bachelor of International Development and Environmental Studies study programme. My thesis is philosophical in nature, advocating for *intercultural philosophy*. While the choice to promote intercultural philosophy could become a subject of critique for representing a normative statement, from the perspective of *intersectionality*, knowledge and research methodologies are never free of value judgment (Collins, 2015, 14). The value choice I am making here is between the Eurocentric taxonomy of academic disciplines and intercultural philosophy, which goes beyond it. It does not mean that I do not use scientific research methods, but I am explicit about their arbitrariness when I do or do not and explain why. Throughout the thesis, I use arguments supporting my choice to move beyond the European conception of scientific neutrality.

The structure of the thesis is in line with the standard academic format, although it would not have to be (Chilisa, 2020, 201–203). It could have been written, for example, in story form, if it was to express my points more accurately. Stories can help when the authors aim to preserve the message of their research, allowing them to escape the rules of scientific language. Adjustments to scientific form necessarily change the meaning of research findings, for 'the closer you get to defining something, the more it loses its context' (Wilson, 2008, cited in Chilisa, 2020). The purpose of scientific research is to define. Theorising is a practice of living that aims to understand other practices but fails to recognise itself as part of what is just a variety of diverse practices of living. The results can also take the form of proverbs or poems from the researched indigenous culture. Essentially, researchers who translate indigenous languages should do so as precisely as possible and, better, write their work bilingually. Even if concepts might be possible to articulate quite similarly in two different languages, by translating them, they lose their context and, therefore, meaning – their meaningfulness changes to serve the science (Chilisa, 2020). In my thesis, when I present pieces of knowledge from indigenous cultures, I try to state their translated and original version.

The research questions we formulate are as follows:

RQ1: To what extent is education at Palacký University embedded in Eurocentrism?

RQ2: If Eurocentrism is present at Palacký University, should it be addressed and how should it be addressed to promote intercultural justice?

The theoretical part of this thesis comprises a literature summary. Literature was obtained by mandatory and recommended reading material for the African Philosophy course I took at Wageningen University during my exchange study programme. I searched for further sources by typing keywords in the Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus domains. To a small extent, I used Google Scholar. In this way, I strived for a balance between, on the one hand, the WoS and Scopus peer-reviewed sources, which are, however, limited in the coverage of books and works in social sciences and humanities and, on the other hand, the increased coverage of Google Scholar in the named fields (Mingers & Leydesdorff, 2015). The scientometrics-based domains allowed me to find highly cited scholars and works, but we should not overlook the exclusionary character of scientometrics (Mingers

& Leydesdorff, 2015) and scientific research in general (Chilisa, 2022). The Educational Resources Information Centre (ERIC) platform was also explored to some degree. A notable part of the literature was then identified by 'snowballing', that is, finding more scholars and publications cited or referenced in previously identified sources. I follow the standard academic method when searching for literature, not only because I have to follow academic standards. Also, I do so because I am a European, thinking naturally inside the scientific frame; thus, I find it beneficial to use 'the most objective' peer-reviewed sources – it makes sense to me. Yet, drawing cartographies around my knowledge, I recognise the subjectivity of my/scientific logic.

The analytical part comprises a text analysis of the *Palacký University Olomouc Strategic Plan for Educational and Creative Activities for the Period 2021+* to discover whether UP is Eurocentric. I analyse it to see whether it acknowledges its Eurocentricity and, in addition, whether it presents some concepts from indigenous epistemologies.

Originally, the analytical part should also encompass the analysis of my Bachelor's degree in International Development and Environmental Studies. Finally, I decided to make my thesis shorter.

2 Analytical Part

As stated earlier, decoloniality is a *process* that requires a long-term, committed effort to make ambitious changes aimed at liberation from the European hegemony. The changes that are called for in theoretical works need to be transformed into active practice. Therefore, our contribution should be perceived as an initial step that raises awareness about decolonisation and invites Palacký University to reassess its role, courses, policies, and initiatives.

UP, not being situated in a former colonial country, still follows the universal model of educating as the majority of world universities, that is, the model corresponding to the European idea of modernity, which served further development and application of European science and which spread the world during colonisation. Therefore, to decolonise our university is to deconstruct the false universality and inclusivity of the knowledge it produces.

2.1 Analysing the *Palacký University Olomouc Strategic Plan for Educational and Creative Activities for the Period 2021+*

The Strategic Plan (SP) was published in 2021 together with the *Palacký University Internationalization Strategy*, which complements it. The SP is in alignment with European, national, and regional strategic plans. I chose the strategy for my analysis because it reflects UP's mission, vision, and values.

In its mission, the UP does not try to hide the values that are inherent to European culture. It says that its mission is to 'disseminate education, pursue independent scientific research and artistic work, and care for the cultural and educational development of human society'. It also mentions explicitly that it stresses the need to prepare students to enter the labour market. It also wants to prepare them 'for their life in a dynamically developing society, in accordance with the European concept of quality in university education and creative activities'. Thus, the UP feels no shame about the fact that 'its education for life' is, in reality, 'education for education' and 'education for the market'. It is not shameful, indeed, every culture does spread knowledge from generation to generation.

Its vision, however, is problematic. It is clear that UP is very proud of its achievements in university rankings and its vision is to be higher and higher in them. What about universities in the 'Global South'? Marked by structural inequality, they lack equipment

and finances (de Sousa Santos et al., 2022). Why does UP say nothing about this? Is it because it was not engaged in colonialism? Well, it is now engaged in coloniality, supporting capitalism through the emphasis that it puts on producing commodities of higher market value than other universities, whereby most of the universities left behind are situated in the South.

UP's values are the following: to seek excellence in education, research, and development to give rise to quality culture; to enhance education based on digital technologies; to create international relationships with other universities; to construct the UP brand characterised by friendly social atmosphere; to be socially responsible and supportive of sustainable development; and finally, to give rise to 'personal responsibility and the freedom of thought of every individual while performing the duties within the University and while participating in public life'.

What is striking is the contradiction between the claim for excellence in education, the promotion of the use of digital technologies which are invented by European science, social responsibility steering towards development (even if sustainable), on the one hand; and the creation of the UP international and friendly community, on the other hand.

As the SP states, because internationalisation is 'an area that spreads in a comprehensive way across a range of activities, procedures, processes, and agendas at the University, it intermingles cross-referentially across the whole document'. Internationalisation has become a common strategy in academic education (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021). But with the contradictions present among the UP's values, it is apparent that what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) argues probably is not far from being true, and, at the core of international exchange programmes, mobilities, internships, and other international initiatives, is 'the international with Europe and North America at the centre'. Global universities emphasise teaching in English and teaching science, not intercultural translation.

Limitations and Positionality

I reflect on my positionality here and also throughout the thesis. Decoloniality can be conducted by both members of the colonial or colonised culture. I see myself as an ally to marginalised cultures, but I dare in no way to speak for them (see de Sousa Santos, 2014). I am privileged to be born into the One-Third-World and study at university, being able to produce knowledge concerning other cultures and doing so in English. I recognise that culture is a social construct, and cultures overlap; therefore, one can talk about another culture while staying outside it when engaging in intercultural philosophy (Mall, 2016). However, the goal of decoloniality is to emancipate marginalised people so they can speak for themselves (de Sousa Santos, 2014). Simultaneously, I regard decoloniality as a step to move from anthropocentrism to critical post-humanism because the relational ontologies of oppressed cultures contrast with the individualistic, human-centred European tradition.

The fact that I was inspired to decoloniality by an African Philosophy course to some degree influences the geographical situatedness of my arguments, many examples coming from African traditional knowledge. However, I do not see this as a problem because I do not generalise. I only compare the European hegemonic philosophy with other philosophies, pointing out the need for epistemic justice.

Conclusion

The thesis highlights the importance of integrating intercultural translation, critical posthumanities, and indigenous epistemologies into the curriculum to challenge the prevailing Eurocentric narratives in science, philosophy, and gender studies. It emphasizes the need for intersectionality in addressing intercultural inequalities and advocates for alliance building and insurgent cosmopolitanism as strategies for fostering a more inclusive, equitable academic environment.

By scrutinizing the coloniality and decoloniality within the context of Eurocentric higher education, Palacký University Olomouc sets a precedent for systemic change. The thesis calls for a reevaluation of the values, assumptions, and power dynamics underlying the creation and dissemination of knowledge, urging a shift towards educational practices that are reflective of a diverse and interconnected world. This transformative approach not only enriches the academic community at Palacký University but also serves as an inspirational model for universities globally, marking a significant step towards the decolonization of higher education.

In summarizing the thesis on "Decolonising Education at Palacký University Olomouc," it is imperative to recognize the institution's efforts in confronting and dismantling the Eurocentric paradigms that have long dominated higher education. This journey towards decolonization addresses critical issues such as cultural Eurocentrism, epistemic injustice, and the various forms of epistemic oppression that pervade educational structures, content, and methodologies.

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